

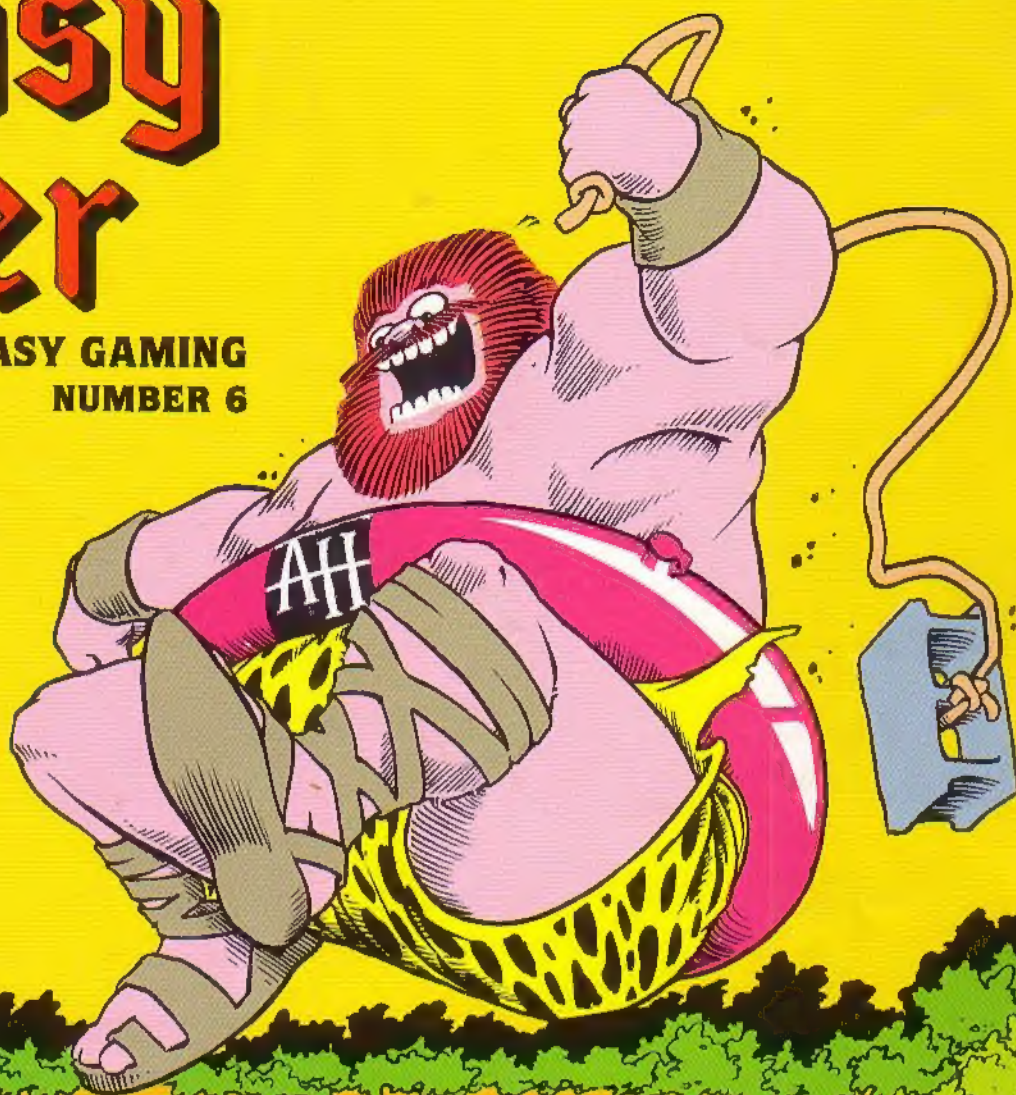
Fantasy Gamer

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THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY GAMING
JUNE/JULY 1984 NUMBER 6

The Giant Jumps In

Avalon Hill's
New RPGs Reviewed



Lost Inheritance

A Complete Fantasy
Roleplaying Adventure

Featured Reviews:

Bushido and Chivalry & Sorcery

Terra II PBM

And 5 Pages of Capsules



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Fantasy Gamer

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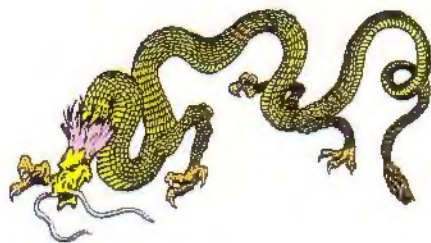
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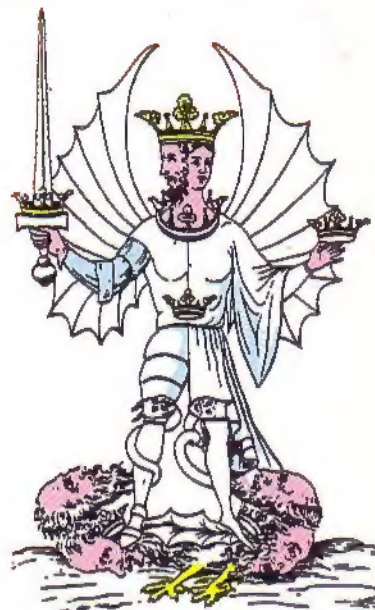
Revised and Resurrected



BUSHIDO™

and

Chivalry and Sorcery™



Review by Ron Pehr

In 1977, Fantasy Games Unlimited published *Chivalry & Sorcery*, a fantasy roleplaying game by Ed Simbalist and Wilf Backhaus. The original *Chivalry & Sorcery* was an 8½" × 11" 128-page, soft-cover rulebook, with three cardboard sheets containing charts and a space for character records. *C&S* was a fantasy simulation of some aspects of medieval European history. Characters were to be patterned after historical types (knights or friars, for example) or mythical types (like magicians or elves).

In 1980, Phoenix Games published *Bushido* by Paul Hume and Bob Charrette. The original edition of the game consisted of two 5½" × 8½" 71- and 60-page soft-cover rulebooks. *Bushido* was an attempt to simulate aspects of medieval Japanese history. Character types, like the samurai, were drawn from Japanese history and mythology.

Chivalry & Sorcery was an extremely complicated game. Numerous charts — vital to play — were scattered throughout the book. Referees and players needed to keep track of lots of data. The rules offered many hints on roleplaying feudal life, but the game mechanics were so complex that — according to my experience and what I've heard and read elsewhere — most people wouldn't (or couldn't) play the game as written. Many did, however, take advantage of the roleplaying ideas offered to supplement simpler RPGs.

Bushido was complicated, too, but the game mechanics were better organized; all die throws related directly to character statistics. As in *C&S*, there was a lot to write down and remember, but *Bushido*'s more orderly mechanics allowed a swifter flow of play. The price of such speed was increased abstraction. For instance: In *Bushido*, the rules for mass battles were covered in seven pages, and depended on army size and arbitrary die rolls. By way of comparison, the *Chivalry & Sorcery* mass battle rules filled 18 larger pages, covered with smaller type on double columns. They, too, were heavy on die rolling but required the use of markers or miniatures and more or less required players to command using strategies and tactics available to a feudal army.

In sum, gamers looking for quasi-historical settings for FRPGs were presented with two complicated games, heavily reliant on numerous charts and abstract die rolls. *C&S* had too many rules, too much minutiae, and an exhausting array of charts — gamers simply couldn't take advantage of all it had to offer. *Bushido* was slightly easier, but really creative play was stifled by too many die rolls.

Whatever their merits, *Chivalry & Sorcery* and *Bushido* just couldn't compete in the marketplace against the big-budget advertising of TSR's *Dungeons & Dragons*. In the last five years, any FRPG has had an uphill battle

against *D&D*; any FRPG that wasn't *D&D* was largely ignored by the general public, who responded to TSR's advertising. The older, more experienced gamers for whom *Chivalry & Sorcery* and *Bushido* were designed may have admired the games, but not enough people played them. The name *Chivalry & Sorcery* was seldom heard outside hard-core gaming circles. *Bushido* suffered a serious blow when its publisher, Phoenix Games, folded.

Fantasy Games Unlimited, publishers of *C&S*, acquired the rights to *Bushido* in 1981 and re-released it in a new format. Last year, *C&S* was also re-released in a new format. This review is an analysis of how both games have changed and how they now compare with one another.

Both games have been improved: They are easier to read; ambiguous rule sections have been reworded; more historical information has been provided; character classes have been more clearly defined. *Bushido* is much the same game it was but elaborated and improved. *Chivalry & Sorcery* preserves little but the original's flavor — it's the same game with new rules.

Bushido now features more information about the original game systems. For instance, the old rules might have said, simply, "There are cities and towns," followed by sample

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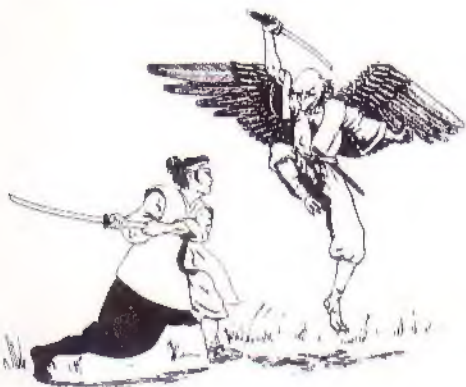
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scenarios which might take place in some of them. The new rules describe different sizes and types of towns, what sorts of trade goods and employment opportunities might be available, and a bit about travel between towns.

Chivalry & Sorcery has retained some of the original game systems and introduced some new ones. This new edition is still complicated (and intended to be) but it is less complex and more playable than before. As an example of what players can expect in *C&S*,



the rules state: "Mages are the most difficult characters to play in *C&S*. Any player contemplating running a Mage should look through the Magick rules carefully before making a decision." The reason for taking such care in choosing whether or not to play a Mage becomes clear later in the rules: Players operating a Mage character who want to cast a spell must do it without looking up the parameters of the spell in the rulebook. Magick is an intellectual profession and *C&S* demands that players use their intellect if they choose to be magic users!

Physical Layout

Bushido now comes in a box, rather than a plastic bag. The 80- and 48-page 8½" × 11" booklets feature darker type and double columns. There is a referee screen and a cardboard character record sheet. The price has gone up to \$16.00, but every new game costs more these days. Besides, in *Bushido* you're getting a bigger game than before.

In *Chivalry & Sorcery* what you get for \$20.00 (up from \$10.00) is a box containing three books (56-, 56-, and 80-pages) and a character-record sheet. The print is much larger than before — a hearty hallelujah! The original, single-volume *C&S* wore out quickly from constant flipping back and forth, looking for obscure rules; presumably, with three volumes, the game will hold up three times as long.

Gaming and Roleplaying

C&S was full of hints on roleplaying, describing the way things were (or are perceived to have been) in medieval Europe. The new *C&S* has even more of this kind of information, and places special emphasis on roleplaying — even veteran gamers can learn from it.

Mass-battle rules have been deleted; the old rules were laborious and didn't fit well

with the idea of individual roleplaying. Also deleted were random encounter tables and any need for "dungeons" as sources of adventures. This requires players/referees to think about adventures and steers the game away from "hack 'n' slash" dungeon scenarios.

Bushido has been enhanced by adding elements rather than deleting them. There is more description of the intricacies of Japanese history: types of treasures, battle results, daimyos and court attendance, unique skills, and artifact making.

Keynote of the new *Bushido* is the idea of "task points" and "effect number." Yes, this involves more die rolling, and yes, it's somewhat abstract, but it provides a unifying aspect in *Bushido* that is absent in *C&S* (which uses several systems in order to accomplish different tasks). In *Bushido*, many tasks are accomplished by rolling 1d20 against a predetermined Base Chance of Success (which may be modified by the particulars of a given situation). More complex tasks — learning a spell, painting a scroll, or creating an arcane Ninja weapon — call for players to roll against the appropriate characteristic a number of rolls equal to a preset number of "task points." The "effect number" is the difference between what a player actually rolls each time and what that player needs in order to accomplish a particular task. A running tally of the effect numbers rolled is kept, until their sum equals or exceeds the number of task points needed in order to accomplish the task. Once the effect numbers equal or exceed the task number, the deed (whatever it may be) is done. Rolls are allowed at appropriate intervals: In learning a spell from a magical scroll, one is allowed a roll every week; in picking a lock, one is allowed a roll every thirty seconds; and so on. This creates a feeling of real-time in the game and makes it possible for players to do anything they can think of, if they allow enough time and have the proper skills.

C&S has a greater variety of skills than it did originally — though not as many as *Bushido* — and a variety of methods are offered for resolving the use of different skills. This lends the game a nice, chaotic, medieval flavor, and the players must put quite a bit of thought into who their characters are and what they are trying to accomplish.

The task point/effect number system used in *Bushido* is quite nice. This simple system, along with some in-depth roleplaying information, makes the revised *Bushido* the equal of *Chivalry & Sorcery*. *C&S*, with its wealth of information and roleplaying background, is as good as it ever was. And it is now presented in a clearer format.

Characters

The essence of any FRPG is the creation of personae in a fantasy world. *Bushido* has clear-cut character classes. Nothing has changed here from the original *Bushido*; character statistics are determined by allowing players to divide a set number of points among the needed attributes. The new rules do offer more historical data on the character types, the non-player characters are better delineated,

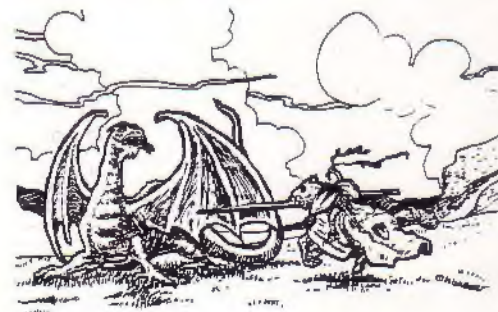
and one new character class has been added — the *Yakuza* (a Japanese criminal organization). Essentially, players strive to produce the ideal Samurai, the ideal Magician, or the ideal whatever.

The original *Chivalry & Sorcery* used random die rolls to determine character statistics, with players picking whatever profession appealed to them. Character classes were vague, unless you were a magick-user. The revised version uses both die rolls and a set number of points players can manipulate in creating their characters. As in *Bushido*, a character's social class may limit that character's possibilities: In *C&S* a warrior not born into nobility can't train for knighthood in much the same way that a *Bushido* warrior not born into nobility cannot begin as a samurai. In many respects, however, character development is more open-ended in the new *C&S* than in the original (or, for that matter, in *Bushido*). The choice of character classes isn't as narrow as in *Bushido*, and there is more incentive for a character to learn different types of skills. In *C&S* different skill types require different game mechanics — it isn't as smooth-playing as *Bushido*, but character creation becomes more interesting (if a lot more time-consuming). *C&S* adds yet another twist to character creation: Players can assign characters like mages or magicians prior experience. In addition, players may still opt to be fantasy beings like Elves or Goblins, but in the new edition, the systems for generating non-human characters are given much more precise treatment.

Overall, comparing the character creation systems used in *Bushido* and *Chivalry & Sorcery*, *C&S* is much more satisfying. This is due to the small element of chance involved, the possibility of "pro-rating" prior experience, and the possibility of creating non-human characters.

Combat

As a practical matter, the heart of any FRPG is the combat system. In *Bushido*, players get a base chance to hit with a given combat skill, with appropriate modifiers added or subtracted as necessary. The combat system introduces the concept of "subdual" damage (as in attacking to subdue), as distinct from "lethal" damage. Punches do the former, swords, the latter. This moves *Bushido* closer to *C&S* and its "fatigue points" and "body points." The revised *Bushido* is still saddled with a rather awkward action-phase system wherein characters can only perform certain actions at predetermined times. This is supposed to impart some of the flavor of



Japanese personal combat, but it is quite unwieldy at first, and always feels artificial. The new *Bushido* offers more weapons and combat skills than the old, as well as a new means of developing unique combat skills.

The old *C&S* combat system was always unwieldy, even after one became familiar with it. In the latest edition, the system boasts one major change which preserves the integrity of



the original while speeding up the action. Originally, each weapon had an individual table listing the chance that weapon has to hit someone in the various grades of armor. The basic to-hit numbers on these charts could be modified by weapons skills, positioning, and magic. Now, each weapon has *one* basic chance to hit, and all modifiers affect that number.

The other major change in the *C&S* combat system involves armor: Armor now subtracts damage. Unlike any other game where armor is used in this manner, in *C&S* the amount subtracted is variable. For instance, a quilted doublet subtracts one to three points of damage, while a suit of chain-mail subtracts 2 to 12. You might think this would slow things down — there is now an extra die roll to be made for armor protection — but, in actual play, it speeds things up. Now, you no longer need to consult a different chart for each weapon, and a different line for each armor type. This speed-up factor is needed, since there are so many different things you'll have to stop and look up during melee.

Combat is more freewheeling than *Bushido* — capturing more of the confusion one might feel in an actual fight — but it is more difficult to memorize the mechanics, and more difficult to play smoothly. I confess that I've never been able to get comfortable enough with the rules that the game flowed the way I wanted it to, but the new combat rules *are* easier than the old, and they do manage to capture the chaotic flavor of the old ones. I guess we can settle for that!

Bushido combat is easier, since the combat systems are the same as other skill systems in the game, and they are definitely a grand attempt to simulate historical combat techniques.

The prime difference between the *Bushido* and *Chivalry & Sorcery* combat systems is

that the former goes for elegant abstraction while the latter goes for a rule for every possibility. Honestly, if you put in a little effort, either combat system can be fun, but neither plays like *D&D*. You have to work to learn these combat systems or they become simple die-rolling exercises. You pay your money and you take your chances.

Magic and Religion

The *Bushido* magic system has one type of mage — the *Shugenja*. These may practice in the Five Schools of magic — the School of Fire, the School of Water, the School of Metal, the School of Wood, and the School of Soil. Each school consists of a certain number of spells. The ability to use these spells depends upon the individual mage's knowledge of the appropriate School, as well as upon the mage's basic characteristics.

The major changes in the new *Bushido*'s magic system are: a regrouping of the spell order, so equivalent spells in different Schools take the same "knowledge" (or skill) to cast; extra basic talents for *Shugenja*, so they can conduct astral combat or spell duels; deletion of the ability to call up *Kami* (spirits, in Japanese mythology); and the ability to enchant artifacts at a lower level of skill than had previously been possible.

The necessity of learning discrete spells, rather than a basic, overall system, makes *Bushido* magic a little less orderly than the rest of the game. Players with mage characters must learn exactly how each spell works. Once mastered, magic fits well into the overall combat system, a clever touch, but it tempts players to play spellcasters as a sort of mobile heavy artillery.

There's little chance of this happening in *Chivalry & Sorcery*. Magicians spend the majority of their time learning new spells and enchanting items to enhance spellcasting ability. The abilities of the magician attempting to learn a spell, and that spell's "level," must be factored together to determine how long a particular spell takes to learn. There are 18 different types of mages, distinguished primarily by the methods they use to acquire new spells. The type of mage a player chooses to play determines in no small part the tactics available in combat situations, and the response to a given problem. Once you get down to it, there is a pattern to *C&S* magic, particularly in battles (where the magic combat system is totally different from the physical combat system). Magic is easier to use than it seems at first glance but, as with every other aspect of *C&S*, the "experienced" player isn't necessarily one who can play the system without a hitch but, rather, the one who knows where to start flipping pages to find the exact description of how something works.

The *C&S* magic system is the least-altered portion of the original rules. Spells are learned on the basis of time spent studying them, rather than on a simple percentile roll; some of the spell descriptions and mage-types have been slightly reworded for clarity, as have descriptions of the creatures mages can summon. Discussions of spellcaster guilds and designing

dungeon-like guildhalls have been deleted. *C&S* magic is easier to use than it was in the original edition, but that's not saying much! In order to use all of the magic options you still have to be absolutely dedicated to a thorough plumbing of the rules.

Bushido's rules for Clerics are very similar to those for spellcasters. Religious miracles are called for by the holy man — the *Gakusho* — in much the same way a mage casts spells. There is, of course, a different rationale — presumably, the *Gakusho* is drawing power from the gods — but the mechanics are the same for mages and Clerics. The new rules amplify the powers of the *Gakusho* and provide information on the differences between the *Shinto Gakusho* and the *Buddhist Gakusho*. *Bushido* Clerics are now more interesting characters; the new rules improve the old system without tampering with the basics.

Rules for Clerics in *Chivalry & Sorcery* have also been revamped. The mechanics for performing miracles are different and descriptions of powers specific to Clerics have been rewritten for clarity. Clerics in *C&S* are more stereotyped than other character types, but then, this seems logical, since they are meant to represent a very specific type — the Christian Cleric of the European Middle Ages.

Stealing & Such

C&S rules for thieving (and other non-fighting or wizardry activities) have been re-



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written in a manner that makes them easier to deal with (and, incidentally, more like *Bushido*). In order to achieve success at breaking and entering, bargaining for items, exercising crafts (such as cooking or metalworking), and the like, players must make a critical roll against the appropriate characteristic. In *Bushido*, this critical roll is always a fraction of a base characteristic; in *Chivalry & Sorcery*, you must check a chart to find the appropriate roll (no surprise there) but the idea is basically the same. What with adopting a system similar to *Bushido*, and the inclusion of data on skills like stealing, C&S has greatly enhanced playability.

Monsters

Little need be said about beasts and monsters in either game: Each has supernatural creatures appropriate to the fantasy worlds in which they are set. The newer versions of the two games describe creatures more clearly (and *Bushido*, at least, adds some new ones) and monsters are appropriately frightful and ferocious.

Summary

Chivalry & Sorcery has discarded some things (I'll miss the heraldic and religious orders of the original, if not the mass-battle rules), has made an effort to simplify most of its game mechanics, and has not sacrificed its

original concept — an FRPG recreation of the Medieval European era. Players have a lot of control over the sorts of characters they create using the new character generation rules.

Still, the game is only playable after a lot of work on the part of players and referees. The players can't just sit down, roll a couple of dice to create a character, and then send those characters adventuring in a world where every contingency can be solved by rolling more dice. As a practical matter, C&S probably hasn't overcome its original problem; it probably remains an idea source, rather than a game people play for its own sake, even in its new, revised form. Yes, it's a better, more playable game than it was, and the rules provide an intense, exciting, and, in many ways, unmatched roleplaying experience. There is simply too much preparation required and too much page-flipping to find the rules you need. The youngsters who make up the bulk of the FRPG market simply won't be able to handle it; even the most ardent roleplayers simply may not have the time and energy to carry on a *Chivalry & Sorcery* campaign.

Bushido, for all the roleplaying opportunities it provides, tends less to roleplaying than to typical FRPG hacking and slashing. Strangely enough, this is a result of its highly playable systems. They're easy to use in combat situations, and people tend to use them with abandon. It may be that adventuring in "Nippon" is, by nature, violent, or I may just happen to know a lot of bloodthirsty players. The comparative simplicity of the mechanics means that people

can become involved in the game more easily than they can with C&S.

Years ago, in a magazine devoted to automobiles, I read a comparative test of a Rolls-Royce and one of the expensive luxury cars. The result there was that the Rolls was more elegant, more impressive, and provided a "luxurious" feeling. The American car lost out emotionally, but worked every bit as well in all objective criteria. Substitute *Chivalry & Sorcery* for the Rolls-Royce, and *Bushido* for the American car, and that assessment could sum up the "road test" you're now reading. As fascinating roleplaying experiences, either of these games is superb; neither will disappoint any serious gamer; both are highly recommended as near-ultimate fantasy roleplaying games.

Bushido (Fantasy Games Unlimited); \$16.00. Designed by Paul Hume and Bob Charrette. One 80-page 8½" x 11" rules booklet, one 48-page 8½" x 11" booklet, one referee's screen, one cardboard character record sheet, boxed. Indefinite playing time. Published 1981.

Chivalry & Sorcery (Fantasy Games Unlimited); \$20.00. Designed by Ed Simbalist and Wilf Backhaus. One 80-page 8½" x 11" rules booklet, two 56-page 8½" x 11" booklets, boxed. Indefinite playing time. Published 1983.

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Lost Inheritance

by David Dunham

Developed by Allen Varney & Warren Spector

Playtesters: Warren Spector, Keith E. Carter, David Noel, Scott D. Haring, Paul Rubin

Introduction

Lost Inheritance was designed for four to six *RuneQuest* characters of moderate experience. It has, however, been genericized so players of any roleplaying game can use the situations and characters described. The adventure plays well in a single session and can be dropped into just about any fantasy-oriented roleplaying campaign; it can also serve as a springboard for a new campaign. Players of this adventure should **STOP READING HERE**.

Characters are assumed to have started out in the City of Brass, one of the largest cities in the known world. (Feel free to substitute any large city with which your characters may be familiar.) From there, they will have to make a one-day journey to the town of Tin Hill to check out an interesting rumor.

The Job

The Inn of Seven Shades is crowded and reeks of the sweat and blood of a hundred battles. The merchants and tradesmen of the City of Brass would blanch at the thought of setting foot in a place such as this, but for those seeking work of a more . . . adventurous . . . nature, the Seven Shades is made to order.

And so they came — fighters of all sorts, men and women with a taste for battle, from all corners of the known world — for the Seven Shades is renowned as the most notorious of inns in the most notorious of cities.

On this day, as always, there are many rumors to be heard in the inn. One such rumor seems particularly intriguing: Oinet, a furniture-maker in Tin Hill, is offering 8000 silvers (or an equally impressive sum in your own game system) for the recovery of lost family valuables. The job seems simple — almost too simple for such a handsome payoff. The characters would be crazy not to pursue this matter further.

A few well-chosen questions (and some ale) will reveal that fat, jolly Oinet is quite well-liked in the area, and his work is well-respected. He lives in Tin Hill, a day's journey away, with his wife Nazru and their two children, but the characters, unable to learn precisely where he lives, will have to seek him out at his shop.

Once in Tin Hill, finding Oinet's shop is no problem — this is a small town. As the characters enter the shop, the smell of sawdust fills their nostrils. At a workbench, Oinet's journeyman, Sab, hammers loudly. Sab is a dark, stocky, surly-looking man about 25 years old. When asked, Sab will silently go and fetch his master. It becomes clear through his use of clumsy sign language that Sab is mute.

Once they've explained the reason for their visit, the characters will be ushered into an alcove in the back of the shop. Nothing but a cloth

separates this — Oinet's private workplace — from the rest of the shop. Here the characters will find that Oinet is really quite a craftsman. The walls are lined with shelves and the shelves are crowded with finely-carved wooden items of all sorts — some functional, but all decorative. As he speaks to the characters, Oinet will continue to work on his latest project, a remarkably delicate bedpost knob, carved in the shape of a swan.

Oinet is indeed looking for adventurers, and he will question the characters closely in an attempt to determine their qualifications. (Of course, he has no means to determine whether the characters tell the truth about themselves; he knows only what the characters look like and what they say they can do.) After a short discussion in which the characters will be expected to describe their talents and abilities, Oinet will glance significantly toward the cloth separating the front and rear of the shop. (Observant characters will notice that Sab's hammering has stopped.)

"We can't discuss particulars on an empty stomach," Oinet will say. "Come by my house tonight for supper." He will give them directions to his house, and tell them where they might find lodging for the night. (At this point, even unobservant characters will notice that Sab has again begun to hammer.)

Oinet's Hut

Oinet lives in a small, but pleasant, hut. It doesn't look like the sort of place a man offering 8000 silvers would live. His wife, Nazru, is slender, in contrast to her portly husband and well-fed children.

The hut is comfortably appointed with furniture of Oinet's own make, a small shrine to a local earth goddess is inset in one wall. In a corner hangs a small cage containing an odd creature about the size of a house cat, which Oinet says is a brillet. "That's Saminota," he says. "He's harmless, so long as you treat him politely."

The brillet is a shiny black animal something like a six-legged chihuahua — except for its needle-sharp teeth. Its bite is painful but does no great damage; it will not bite a human unless directly attacked. Around the brillet's neck is a small leather collar with a metal identification tag. On one side are Oinet's name, address, and the words, "Reward for safe return." On the other side, the tag reads, in flowing archaic script, "SAMINOTA. Return me to my origin."

Characters will be startled to discover that the brillet talks — or rather mimics — like a parrot. The animal will stare blankly and recite, in exact imitation of the resonant baritone of an old man, "Approach the portal directly." The brillet repeats this every few minutes, but never says anything else.

"That's my uncle. His voice, that is," Oinet says. "He gave the critter to me just before he died. Already saying that when we got it, and never another word but that since. Peculiar, I call it, just peculiar." Oinet doesn't know where the creature came from. Other questions will be deferred until after dinner.

Nazru begins to serve plentiful portions of tasty stew, urging second helpings on the characters, especially the thin ones. The kids ask lots of questions about the City of Brass, about adventures the characters may have had, and about adventuring in general. After dessert, the children are sent out, and Oinet tells the characters what he wants.

"I had an uncle — Riyan was his name — lived in a house in a clearing in the woods, an easy day's walk from here. Well, he died, and left his inheritance to me. I always was his favorite nephew, I guess. Anyway, I couldn't find the inheritance. I looked all over his house — my house — even dug up the garden. He'd hidden it too well."

"And I say he didn't leave anything!" interrupts Nazru.

"And I still say I didn't look hard enough!" Oinet says. "At any rate, I stayed away from my shop as long as I could, but had no luck. I've started looking around for treasure hunters. That's where you come in."

(At this point, Oinet is ready to discuss terms. The offer of 8000 silvers was — as the players should have expected — merely a come-on.

In fact, he's offering 25% of his inheritance, but he can be bargained up to 50%. If anyone discusses advance payment, Nazru will firmly insist that she's not going to spend any money on this wild goose chase. Unfortunately, Oinet has no idea exactly how large the inheritance is. Oinet is lucky he's a charismatic chap, because the deal, as it stands at this time, doesn't look terribly appealing. Still, the job sounds easy, and Oinet is quite charismatic . . .)

Assuming the characters go for the deal, Oinet will answer what questions and provide what information he can. He'll tell them:

1) The current occupant of the house is his sister Nringa. Uncle Riyan's will made no provisions for Nringa, who, if the truth be known, is something of a shrew.

2) The search must be conducted without damaging the house in any way. Oinet is quite insistent on this point.

3) If the characters ask about Riyan himself, Oinet will tell them that his uncle was a bit eccentric. He never married, used to entertain "peculiar" visitors — people with bad reputations, troublemakers, purported mages, and (some said) even worse. Oinet will also reveal that Riyan had done a good bit of adventuring before settling down to grow apples. If he takes a liking to the characters, Oinet may even reveal that his uncle claimed to be a mage. He tried to teach Oinet some of his magicks, but either Oinet had no talent for it, or Riyan was just a big talker and not really a mage at all.

4) If any character asks to take the brillet on the search, Oinet will look at him or her strangely, but will agree after some argument. The brillet is tame enough to be let out of its cage; it will stay with whichever character takes it.

After the characters have gathered their information, a suspicious noise outside an open window will alert the party. When they look out the window, they will see a shadowy form running away: Oinet's apprentice, Sab. If anyone attempts to shoot, capture, or pursue Sab, he will take a bend in the road or otherwise get out of sight — and vanish mysteriously.

Oinet doesn't have much to say about Sab except some vague suspicions. "He showed up at my door not long ago." (If asked, Oinet will recall it was shortly after Riyan died.) "I never did find out much about him, but he's a hard worker — and the quality of his work! Remarkable . . . almost magical. I wish to the goddess he could talk; he's got some explaining to do, he does. *Very peculiar*."

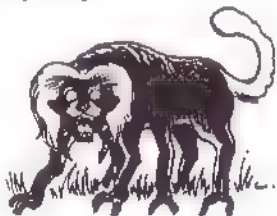
The House

When the characters arrive, they will notice smoke rising from the chimney. Oinet's sister Nringa is home. She is an ordinary-looking, middle-aged woman. She does not want adventurers poking around "her" house and will refuse them entrance. If they enter anyway, she will demand they leave and threaten that her husband Tumban will take care of them when he returns this evening from a hunting trip.

If all else fails, and the characters force their way into the house, she will send Tumban to get the law as soon as he returns home (which will be several hours after the characters arrive). If the law is brought in, the characters will find themselves arrested when they return to the house (as they must) after the adventure runs its course or (gamemaster's choice) they will be hounded by the police until they are caught. They will be charged with trespassing and forced to pay a sizable fine. (The local authorities don't bother putting people in jail, preferring instead to fleece strangers in court.)

The characters can try to persuade or bribe Nringa to let them look around; she will have none of it, but Tumban will definitely accept a small bribe and silence her. If all else fails, the party can return to Oinet, who will return with them and convince Nringa to let them search the house. He will remind her in no uncertain terms that the house is his. (During the course of this interchange it should become clear that there is no love lost between Oinet and his sister.) Under no circumstances will he take part in their investigation of the house, however — "I've wasted too much time here already, I have."

When the characters finally begin their search, Nringa will follow them around suspiciously. She says openly that they are up to no good, that they are out to rob her. (The GM should make her behavior as suspicious as possible while still leaving plausible reasons for her actions. In fact, Nringa is a red herring, not involved in any aspect of the scenario).



There is nothing of interest in the house except one unusual door-knob. A careful search (successful use of Spot Hidden, Perception, or equivalent roll) will reveal that the doorknob of one closet looks out of place: It is the only brass doorknob in the house. (The doorknob will detect as magical if the characters think to check.) If Onet's brillet is let loose in the house, it will scurry through the rooms, leading the party a merry chase, then finally finish its journey before the closet, frantically leaping up and nipping at the doorknob.

The closet appears to be just an ordinary closet (although it too will detect as magical). Nringa uses it to store brooms, a butter churn, and other odds and ends. If a character goes inside the closet and closes the door, the closet will remain a closet. If, however, any player casts any kind of spell while in contact with the doorknob, or brings any magical or enchanted item into the closet (the referee can be very liberal here), the magic inherent in the door will be activated. This is the beginning of the next phase of the scenario.

The Darkland

Once the magic in the door is activated, the closet opens onto another world, the Darkland. Characters who enter the magic portal will briefly see the closet doorframe as a small, rapidly-diminishing rectangle engulfed in darkness; they will not be able to go back or communicate with those still outside, though they can still hear them (distantly).

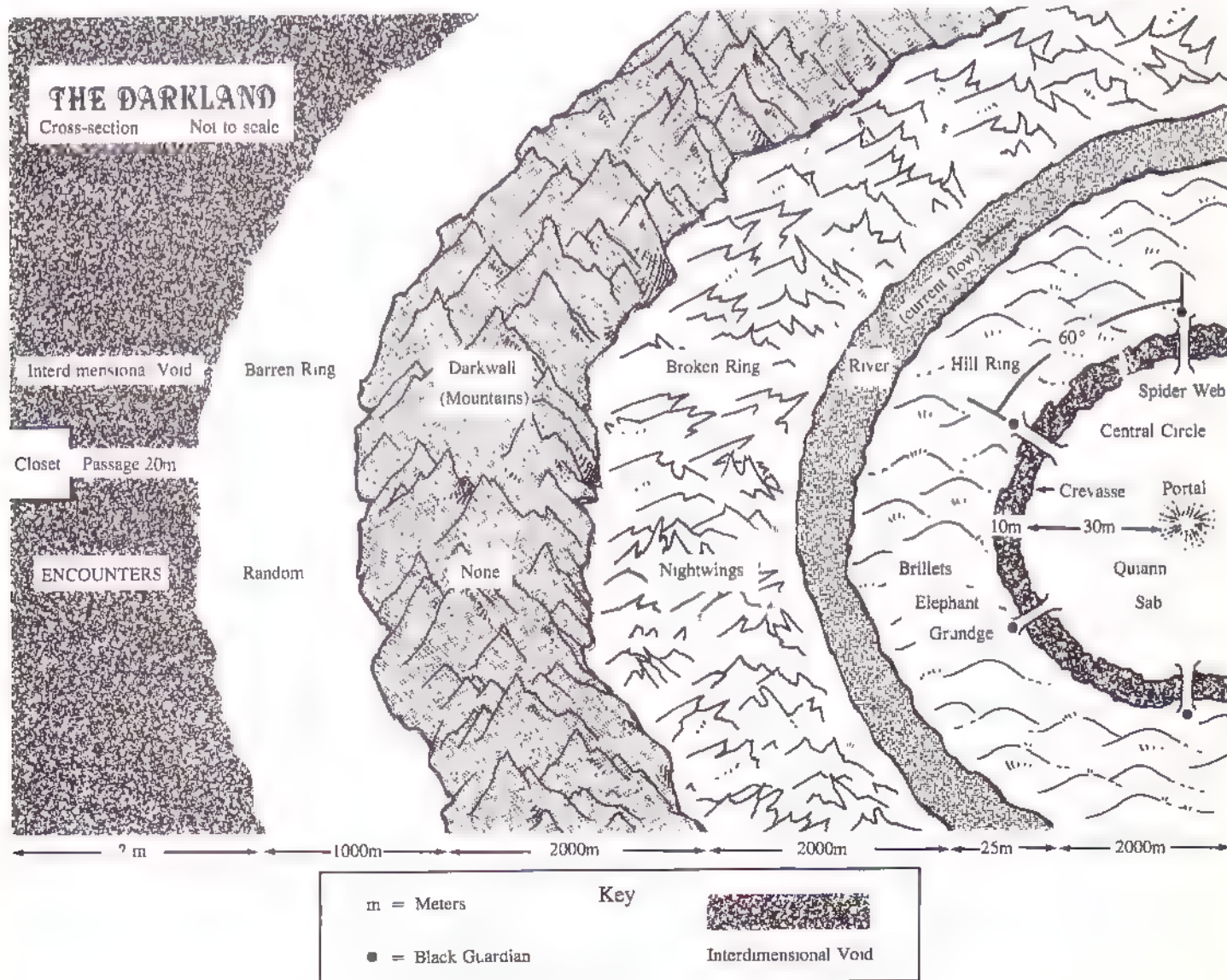
After all the characters have passed through the portal, they will hear a piercing scream — Nringa, still outside. They cannot return to help or investigate. No further sound can be heard. (GM note: Sab has

attacked Nringa, bound and gagged her, and will follow the party on their journey through the Darkland for reasons which will be explained later.)

The party has no choice but to proceed. They are in an area of almost palpable darkness, which restricts their initial movement to a narrow passage running straight ahead for about 20 meters or so. The walls of this passage aren't impenetrable, characters can penetrate them with difficulty, but the resistance grows — and the temperature drops, and the gravity decreases — the farther they go. GMs should give players numerous opportunities to turn back to the "passage," for if a character persists in trying to leave it, he or she will eventually (after a few minutes, game time) drift off into the cold blackness of the void between dimensions, to fall through emptiness forever.

The "path of least resistance" becomes progressively darker as the players traverse it, ending in complete blackness when it opens out onto the giant "dimensional bubble" holding the Darkland. The darkness of this realm is so intense that torches, lanterns, light spells, etc. have only half their normal range and their effects are only half as powerful as normal. "Walls" and "ceilings" — resistant boundaries like those which bound the path — are too far away to be revealed by any light source the characters may have. The only sounds are strange tittering noises, and tremendous, unearthly rumbles not unlike the songs of whales. These sounds are the by-products of the interface between dimensions.

If Onet's brillet is with the party, it will scurry in a straight line away from the passage exit, repeating in Riyan's voice, "Approach the portal directly — directly — directly!" The party can reach its goal by following the creature. It will remain with the characters throughout the journey. If the brillet is not present, or if the party doesn't want to



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follow it, a faint glow will appear in the distance. This is the only visible landmark and marks the party's goal; however it is not nearly bright enough to provide any illumination.

If the characters head off in another direction, they will discover that the Darkland is roughly circular. The glow will always appear at the "center" and the mountain range (or "Darkwall") will always appear in silhouette against the glowing area.

The outer perimeter of the Darkland, between the dimensional boundary and the Darkwall — referred to here as the "Barren Ring" — is a flat featureless plain. At the GM's discretion, it may be inhabited by sundry nocturnal "nuisance monsters" from whichever game system you are using; assume that such monsters have blundered through temporary "holes" in the dimensional continuum into the Darkland, and have been unable to escape or surmount the Darkwall. However, this region of the Darkland has no indigenous creatures.

After travelling through this unnerving darkness for 1000 meters,

Night Wings

These creatures feed on any available heat source. In an attack on characters bearing torches, the Night Wings will be torn between the torches and the people carrying them, going after the torches one-third of the time (absorbing warmth equal to normal fire damage), and attacking people the rest of the time. Night Wings attack with ferocity and hit about 50% of the time, inflicting minor damage (considered to be warmth "sucked" from the victim's body). The damage can be healed normally.

Night Wings are black, rag-like creatures resembling large bats. They can take about as much damage as bats in your system. (GMs are urged to give all Night Wings the same even number of hit points. The reasons for this will become apparent.) Blunt weapons do normal damage to Night Wings. When hit with an edged weapon, however, hits doing less than half the hit points a Night Wing can take are ignored completely. When an edged weapon hits for half the total a Night Wing can take (or more), the creature splits in half. It takes no damage whatsoever.

Each half-Night Wing can take half the damage the whole Night Wing could take. Each half is twice as hard to hit as the whole was, and each half attacks independently. The half-Night Wings can be dispatched rather easily with blunt weapons. Edged weapons are, again, a problem. A hit which would do less than half the total hits of the original creature is ignored; a strike which does half or more of the half-creature's hits will cause it to split yet again, leaving the hapless character with four creatures to fight instead of two (or one). After the second split, any hit, from any kind of weapon, will kill a quarter-Night Wing. These things are a nuisance!

Full-size Night Wings will be sated when they have absorbed warmth (i.e., when they have inflicted damage) equal to their total hit points; a half-Night Wing is sated when it has absorbed half the beginning total; a quarter-Night Wing is sated when it has absorbed a quarter of the whole Night Wing's beginning hit points. Satiated attackers will flutter off and land some distance away from a battle. They will still attack if disturbed. Satiation lasts about two hours, at which time they have to feed again.

A character being attacked by a Night Wing may attempt to grab it (at a moderate minus to dexterity roll) and feed it with a torch. Having caught one, a player rolls one six-sided die: On a roll of 1, the Night Wing will refuse the torch and attack the character; on a roll of 2-6, it will feed off the torch. (Characters may even be able to acquire pets in this way. But if a Night Wing is taken from the Darkland, it may — at the GM's discretion — pine away for lack of darkness.)



the characters will reach the mountain range called the Darkwall. The mountains — about 800 meters high — are smooth and soft to the touch; they seem to be built of solid darkness. The mountains can be climbed using standard Climbing rolls. (Falls do only half damage, the surface is rather soft.) Characters must not stop on the mountain slopes or they will begin to sink into the semi-solidified darkness at a rate of six inches for every minute they remain stationary. After a short time a character will be completely entombed, but can be pulled out by friends on the surface; five minutes after entombment, a character who has not suffocated will have sunk below reach; another minute after that and the character will fall through the dimensional barrier into the interdimensional emptiness.

The characters can walk all the way around the mountains (a distance of approximately 36 kilometers), though this will do them little good. If and when they climb the mountains, the effort will drain them of 10% of their total hit points through fatigue. Beyond the Darkwall is a ring of broken terrain about 2000 meters wide, bounded on its inner edge by a circular river (described below). As they descend the mountains into this area (called "The Broken Ring" for convenience), the characters will begin to notice small black scurrying creatures racing around and under the rocky ground — brillets, identical to the one in Oinet's hut. (If Oinet's brillet is with the party, many other brillets will cluster around it curiously. Oinet's brillet will not leave the party.)

Brillets are the scavengers of the Darkland. They are harmless to living things and have no natural enemies; if one is attacked for any reason, the rest will run away, but they are very trusting by nature and will likely return as soon as the offense is forgotten (a matter of minutes). Though brillets are not very smart, they have a curious ability to perfectly mimic any sound they hear — but only one particular group of sounds for each brillet. A given brillet may, at some random point in its development, "imprint" on a sound or a line of speech it hears. It will then repeat it at random intervals, exactly and mindlessly, throughout its life.

For game purposes, the GM should use the brillets as a means to convey information regarding the Darkland, Riyan, Sab, Quiann, and their mysterious network of relationships (see below). The brillets are everywhere in the Darkland; whenever there is a lull in the adventure, the GM can have a brillet drop another clue to the players. For example:

After establishing the brillets' "imprinting" ability by having one or two mimic the characters' speeches (this can be played for comic effect), the GM can then, throughout the scenario, interject a few of the sentences and sounds that the brillets have picked up. Red herrings, statements made by the players, and random screwball sounds should abound, but the pertinent clues should be given no more than one or two at a time, paced so that the eighth clue comes as the players enter the Hill Ring (see page 15). The clues should be given in approximately the following order:

- 1) (A beautiful female voice — the voice of Quiann, who will show up later in the adventure) "Trapped! You've trapped me . . . to be just another ornament in your little realm!"
- 2) (The angry trumpeting of a bull elephant in the distance. The party will encounter this elephant later, though not in the manner they expect.)
- 3) (An unknown voice; this is Sab, before his voice was stolen.) "Will this headband help me pass these barriers?"
- 4) (Riyan's voice) "Words are not enough. Enchantment often requires other elements. That which protects will also speed you on your way."
- 5) (Sab's voice) "Gad — the beast is enormous. A great breach in the continuum, to have brought such a monster here!"
- 6) (Riyan's voice) "You shall be punished for this, upon our return to the land of light. You will not return here."
- 7) (Riyan's voice) "For an apprentice, your mind is too much on worldly things, Sabristus."
- 8) (The thundering approach of the bull elephant.)
- 9) (Riyan's voice) "Plot whatever 'revenge' you wish, Quiann. While I wear this, nothing of the Darkland can harm me."

When the party is about halfway (1000 meters) across the Broken Ring, a flurry of black, rag like shapes will erupt from behind a low, dark outcropping. These creatures, known as Night Wings, are attracted to, and feed on, heat. They view the characters as a source of

energy. The number of Night Wings attacking will equal the number of characters in the party, but they will instinctively seek out characters carrying torches.

It is simply not possible to outrun the Night Wings, so characters will have to stand their ground and slug it out. Having dealt with them, the party can continue looking around the Broken Ring — but there is nothing of interest here, and new waves of Night Wings will attack every ten minutes or so (game time).

(If the players seem intent on spending time searching the Broken Ring, GMs should feel free to add random encounters as needed to spur them on. These encounters represent creatures that blundered into the Darkland and had the stamina or intelligence to make it across the Darkwall. These encounters should be drawn from the creatures available in your game system and should be a bit tougher than the random encounters of the Barren Ring.)

The River

After dealing with the Night Wings and any random encounters, the characters can continue toward the central glow; after about 1000 meters, they will come to a rapidly-flowing (8 kph current) river of inky liquid. The river is 25 meters wide and quite magical; it flows back upon itself, forming a complete circle. (What the characters don't know is that the black liquid is simply water and it is less than a meter deep; characters can wade across.) Due to the strong current, they must make saving rolls against dexterity or similar attribute every 8 meters to avoid slipping and falling into the water. Characters who slip will return to the point where they slipped in about 75 to 90 minutes. (Remember, the river is circular.) There are no ill-effects from getting a soaking, but wet torches don't burn very well. Characters can walk all the way around the river (a distance of approximately 12½ kilometers); this will do nothing but waste time.

The Hill Ring

Beyond the river is a ring of hilly terrain (called "The Hill Ring" for convenience) 2000 meters wide. In this area, random encounters (if any) should involve fairly formidable monsters, with the intelligence or stamina to overcome the obstacles the players have encountered so far. The GM should have paced the brillet clues to this point so that the players now hear the trumpeting of the "bull elephant" (a brillet) — a decoy encounter designed solely to scare the bejeezus out of the characters.

Shortly after this, the party sees (assuming they still have a functioning source of light) a large, shapeless mass absolutely covered with brillets. Closer examination will reveal this to be the corpse of an elephant. (GMs should describe the dead creature rather than simply saying it's an elephant — how many of your characters would recognize an elephant?) The beast is freshly killed, but has already been scavenged almost to the bone. One foreleg of the elephant has been ripped away, and its skull has been bashed in, as if by a large, blunt weapon or a huge fist.

Not long after this, a wave of brillets will scurry out of the darkness directly at the characters. Regardless of a hostile reaction from the party, dozens and dozens of brillets will continue to race at them — and by them! The brillets are not attacking, but rather fleeing in panic from something — something that is approaching the characters.

Moments after the brillets pass, the party will hear a loud stomping tread and catch a whiff of a noxious odor reminiscent of uncleaned stables. At this dramatic moment, a large hill giant will approach, waving the partly-consumed elephant leg in a manner which might be friendly — or threatening. He has a large club, an odd bracelet around one wrist, and a magic helmet that allows its wearer to see in total darkness. The helmet was originally made for a dwarf, and the giant wears it, not on his head, but on his right forefinger, like a thimble. He still derives its full magical benefit wearing it this way. He wears nothing else but a greasy loincloth.

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Grundge

Strength: 5-6x human
Intelligence: Low human
Dexterity: Average human
Charisma: Low human, but don't tell him that!
Size: 16'
Weight: 2500 lbs.



Grundge is a giant about 16 feet tall. He's built like a very solid tree. He weighs close to 2500 pounds, none of which is fat. He is powerful enough to give the entire party a run for its money (being about five times human strength, and quite fast for his bulk, as fast as an average human being). He is quite a sight in his greasy loincloth (and nothing else in the way of clothing). He is about as bright as a five-year-old human child. He is quite fond of music (and elephant meat). He is really quite friendly, though easily bored.

His primary weapon is a large club. In addition to his club, he has in his possession a magic helmet (dwarf-sized) which he wears on the forefinger of his right hand. This allows him to see in total darkness.

Should the characters attack without provocation, the giant (whose name is Grundge) will fight to the death, savagely. But if they greet him or hold fire, Grundge will politely greet them in their own language, and in a startlingly human voice. (In fact, the players have heard several brillels speaking in this voice — Sab's voice.) Grundge is not very smart

— about like a bright five-year-old — but he knows some useful information: other menaces in the Hill Ring (if any — GM's discretion), the crevasse and the various ways to cross it (see below), and how the elephant got here. "Him must have fallen through dark hole in ground somewhere, like Grundge. End up here. Grundge like it here. Good food. No one around to call Grundge stupid."

Grundge will not give much useful information until the party sings for him. Grundge likes to dance; he will ask the characters to sing something, and he will gyrate clumsily to whatever appropriate tune the players come up with. (He has no ear for music, and under normal circumstances will enjoy any song, no matter how badly performed. If, however, your game system provides for singing ability, you might want to key the amount and quality of information Grundge provides to the quality of the song.) Grundge will ask the biggest character in the party (male or female) to dance with him. There is a 50% chance that dancing with Grundge will inflict minor accidental damage to the character. Fortunately, the giant will not be insulted by a polite refusal.

After one number, Grundge will talk freely with the party, telling them whatever he can. He knows nothing about what lies beyond the crevasse, Riyan's treasure, or how to escape the Darkland. It turns out, however, that Grundge knows Riyan rather well. "Him nice man. Good. Him bring Quiann, the dark lady, here. Quiann — she pretty." He rambles on about Quiann for some minutes, obviously much taken with her. Eventually, he returns to the subject of Riyan: "Riyan give Grundge a voice, to protect for him." Here Grundge will finger the thin chain around his wrist. Though for him it is a bracelet, a normal-sized person would have to wear the chain as a heavy necklace. Dangling from the chain is a reddish amulet about the size of a robin's egg.

(The amulet contains a human voice — Sab's, though Grundge doesn't know this; players can probably guess. Grundge was mute before Riyan entrusted him with the amulet to prevent its theft. Anyone wearing the amulet can automatically speak in its voice and its language, though the wearer does not gain the knowledge or abilities of the person whose voice has been captured. Grundge will only part with the amulet if Quiann — his beautiful "dark lady" — asks him for it.

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Characters might consider casting an illusion of Riyan to fool Grundge, but remember, they don't know what he looked like.)

After some conversation, Grundge will grow bored and go off to see what's left of the dead elephant. He will never accompany the party. If the party continues to explore the Hill Ring, they will encounter some nocturnal, hill dwelling monster every twenty minutes or so (game time).

The Crevasse

If the characters continue inward to the central glow, they will come to a crevasse ten meters wide and apparently bottomless. (It is so dark, however, that the characters have no way of guessing how deep it is.) It is possible to walk all the way around the circular crevasse (a distance of approximately 250 meters) but there is nothing to be gained by doing this. Anyone falling into the crevasse can make three attempts to grasp the jagged walls. (Use saving throws against falling as dictated by your game system, with a minus for darkness.) Characters who fail to make their saving throws plunge into interdimensional nothingness. (A GM can save unlucky characters from falling forever by dropping them into another dimensional plane — where they might even be able to join a new campaign.)

There is little visible beyond the crevasse except clouds of glowing mist. This gaseous light envelops the area encircled by the chasm and falls into the chasm in great roiling cascades. The source of the glow can be faintly perceived from the edge of the crevasse; it is a point of light about thirty meters inward from the far side of the chasm. Nothing else is visible on the far side, so the players can't lasso anything on that side and use ropes to get across.

There are only two ways to cross the crevasse (though characters should be allowed to climb down one side for a mile or so if they like; at

that point, they should be informed that the crevasse shows no sign of bottoming out). The two ways to get across are to use the bridges or traverse the spider web.

The Bridges

There are six bridges spanning the chasm; these are located at 60-degree intervals around the perimeter. The bridges are two meters wide and made of stone as black as night. A single Black Guardian (see description) waits patiently, unmoving, before each bridge. The Black Guardians are immobile, but positioned so characters cannot reach the bridges without going directly past them.

The Guardians can be thwarted in a variety of ways. They can be circumvented by brute force (but not easily). Invisibility will hide characters from them, and they can be tricked into attacking an illusion or similar decoy while players sneak by onto the bridge. Finally, they are extremely sensitive to bright lights; any spell which dazzles its victims or features bright, pyrotechnic effects will disable the Guardian long enough to allow players to cross a bridge. A basic light spell, fireball, or torch in the face will not work.

If the players come up with an appropriately "dazzling" spell (and it is ultimately up to the GM to determine what will and will not work), or defeat a Guardian in combat, the Guardian will "melt" into the ground from which it springs. As it melts, a defeated Guardian's mouth will open in what appears to be a scream, though the characters hear nothing. If they move immediately across the bridge, they can cross normally and without incident; however, if they remain, even for a minute (game time), a ring of Guardians will "grow" from the ground in a circle around the party, and attack. There will be as many Guardians as there are characters.

The Spider Web

The other way to cross the chasm (aside from flying or jumping) is via a giant spider web extending across. This will be found about 75 degrees around from wherever the players originally approach the crevasse. The spider web is a chaotic, asymmetrical mass of sticky strands, punctuated by occasional shapeless cocoons of webbing, marking the spider's previous kills.

The giant spider is about twelve feet long and can be handled routinely as a similar monster in your game system. It will scuttle out from the shadows and attack when a character has climbed halfway across. If your system doesn't already have mechanisms to deal with this situation, assume a character can climb across in one minute, unimpeded; that he or she must make saving throws against strength four times to avoid becoming stuck to the web, and failing one means the character cannot move for ten seconds — the amount of time it will take to pull free. (Note that a stuck character can either defend itself against attack or spend ten seconds pulling free, but not both.) Characters always attack and defend at a minus to dexterity or aiming ability while maneuvering across the web, as well as doing only half normal damage. A character stuck in the web should have substantial minutes to all attacks until he or she manages to work (or be cut) free.

The web is not very flammable, and will only smoke and smoulder when ignited. A strand can be cut or sawed through as if it were tough hemp rope, four inches thick. At least 12 strands of the web must be cut before its structure is weakened to the point of collapse.

There is one previous kill of interest in the web. One cocoon, larger than the rest by a noticeable margin, can be cut open to reveal an exsanguinated human corpse clad in wizard's robes. The late witch has a gauntlet on her right hand woven of gold cloth. This glove is magical: It gives the wearer a "radar sense," functioning as an extended sense of touch, that allows normal movement and perception in total darkness. It has a range of 10 meters. The witch also carries a non-magical scroll inscribed in an unknown language. If the characters can return to their world with the scroll, an experienced mage or scholar can decipher it. It is much too difficult to translate in the Darkland during the course of this adventure. The scroll contains a password which, when uttered in the pool of glowing mist, will transport its speaker to another land or dimension of the GM's choice and/or design. The players will, of course, have to return to the Darkland to use it!

Black Guardians

Strength: 5x human
Intelligence: NA
Dexterity: 2x human
Size: 10'
Weight: Not applicable. They are part of the ground!
Constitution/Hits: 3x human
Special: 4 arms — 2 for grasping or hand-to-hand combat; 2 ending in large broadswords (double normal damage).

Each Black Guardian is a being of solid darkness, hard as rock, and imbedded in the "ground" of the Darkland to what would be waist-level on a human being. They wait patiently, unmoving, a foot away from the end of the bridge which spans the crevasse.

Guardians have four enormous arms, two of which end in a broadsword-like blade instead of a hand. They use these with blinding speed and skill, attacking twice as often as a human being. Not intelligent in any conventional sense, the enormous creatures should be regarded as manifestations of the natural forces controlling and affecting the Darkland.

The Guardians are strong and durable enough to defeat the entire party of characters (or even Grundge), given some luck. The best way around a Guardian is to divert or outwit it, or subject it to intensely bright light.

Guardians can see in total darkness as though it were full daylight, but they cannot detect invisible characters and will be foiled by any plausible illusion. The Guardians are deaf, dumb, and in fact have no senses except sight.



The Central Circle

Beyond the crevasse, all is shrouded in the cool, glowing mist. The characters will even have trouble seeing each other if they get more than an arm's length apart. (If, however, they still have lit torches, they will notice that the mist dissipates around the flame.) All the players can make out is one particularly bright glow about 30 meters off in the fog; this is the glowing portal of mist at the center of the Darkland. The portal appears as a luminous spherical region about four meters in diameter.

As the characters move toward the light, the sound of a female voice raised in anger will drift toward them from directly ahead. As they approach the center of the glowing mist, they will begin to smell a sweet, spicy, pleasant odor, and feel a warm, humid breeze. The warmth has created a bubble of visibility in the glowing fog. In the bubble, characters will see a large, brightly glowing torch, the source of the warmth creating the pocket of visibility.

Entering the pocket of visibility, the characters will see two figures. One is Quiann, Grundge's "dark lady" — a tall, willowy woman with pitch-black skin and hair, and reddish eyes. She is clad in a dark red wrap. On her forehead she wears a rust-colored metal band. She is speaking loudly and rather stridently to a man who is on his knees before her:

"You worm," Quiann spits at him. "What use have I for the likes of you, now that Riyan is dead? Can you send me home? Can you tell me the password? Why, you can't even help yourself! We are trapped here forever . . . together. How romantic!" Her voice drips bitter sarcasm as she utters these last words.

The characters will notice that the man on the ground is none other than Oinet's mute apprentice, Sab. (Observant characters will note that he wears a headband identical to Quiann's.) Sab is weeping openly, and gesturing pitifully in an attempt to express his love of Quiann and his sorrow. He is obviously no threat to anyone (except possibly himself). Upon seeing the characters, Quiann's tone will change instantly, as she

Sab

Strength: High human
Intelligence: Average- High human
Dexterity: Low- Average human
Charisma: Low human
Size: 5'8"
Weight: 140 lbs.
Constitution/Hits: Low-Average human

Not very successful as an apprentice magician, Sab has only a few low-level spells (nothing that will give the party much trouble in a fight) and an unexpected gift for wood-shaping magic, which came in handy when he infiltrated Oinet's establishment. If he regains his voice and gets out of the Darkland alive, he might just want to give up magic and stick to woodcarving (in some faraway place beyond Oinet's reach), or he might think that Riyan's treasure is all he needs to become a major wizard — this is up to the referee.

Sab is moderately strong and sturdily built, but low on stamina and dexterity, though shrewd and cunning. He is not terribly intelligent. Other traits include greed, gullibility, and bitterness toward women in general and Quiann in particular. (It must be pointed out, however, that this bitterness offers no "protection" against Quiann's near-hypnotic allure.)

Sab's only magic item is the protective headband which he stole from Riyan upon his dismissal.




directs her attention toward the players. Sab will take this opportunity to stumble off into the mist.

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Quiann

Strength: Average human
Intelligence: High human
Dexterity: Average human
Size: 5'9"

Weight: 125 lbs.

Charisma: Very high human (see text)

Constitution/Hits: Average human

Quiann is from a realm of total darkness. She is ordinarily unable to see in light — even the light of torches, light spells, or the glow of the Darkland portal. Her skin is jet black and she gives off a pleasing, spicy aroma which has a subtle hypnotic effect on human beings. (Characters will feel an unexplained urge to do whatever they can to help her, though they will not lose sight of their own goals). She feels no qualms about using her hypnotic power and sex appeal to achieve her ends.

Though powerful in her own realm, Quiann is essentially powerless in the Darkland. She is strongly charismatic, attractive, and intelligent (and her natural, semi-hypnotic power gives her some undeniable advantages when dealing with humans). She has great knowledge of and sensitivity to magic. By dropping a few choice phrases from her extensive mystic training, she could, if she wished, bluff most anyone who doesn't know any better into giving her a wide berth.

Quiann is not especially strong and not especially dextrous. In addition to her natural defenses, she wears a headband given to her by Riyan which protects her from all physical danger as long as she remains in the Darkland. She also possesses one other magic item; a crystal carried in her wrap allows her to see in the light as if it were her natural darkness. (This is what allows her to see in the glowing mist of the portal and in torchlight.) It will do nothing for a creature which sees in light.



GM can resolve this climactic encounter in a variety of ways. The players can charge immediately after Sab; they can take the time to talk to Quiann; or they can split up and send part of the group after Sab while the rest stay behind to talk to Quiann. For her part, Quiann will insist on making contact with the characters.

Here are the events that led to the current situation: Quiann is a sorceress from another dimensional plane — a dimension of total darkness. Riyan lured her to the Darkland and trapped her there; he was a lonely man who craved human, or near-human, company. However innocent Riyan's intentions may have been, Quiann proved rather a bad companion who wanted nothing more nor less than to return to her homeland. In an attempt to win her freedom, she seduced Riyan's apprentice, Sab, and enlisted his aid in her struggle against Riyan (in whom she had no interest whatsoever).

Sab was no match for Riyan — either in magic or intellectual prowess. Riyan, hurt by the lack of interest shown by Quiann and the duplicitous nature of his apprentice, dismissed Sab upon their return to the outside world. The erstwhile apprentice would never again come under Riyan's tutelage, nor would he re-enter the Darkland, there to be reunited with his lover Quiann. Riyan made sure of this by stealing Sab's voice and storing it in an amulet which he took back into the Darkland and entrusted to the giant, Grundge, for safekeeping. Unable to utter the words necessary to cast even the simplest spell, Sab was forced to wait until someone else managed to gain entrance to the Darkland and then follow along behind. (Since he possessed a protective headband, he was able to make much better time through the Darkland than the characters, reaching the Central Circle well ahead of them.)

Sab's primary motivation in following the characters into the Darkland is, of course, to regain his voice and, secondarily, to return to Quiann. If contacted by the characters, he may attempt to communicate with them, to enlist their aid in the quest to take back the voice Riyan stole from him. Though he cannot speak, he can communicate through signs and gestures, or with a writing implement if a character offers

one. (Bear in mind, however, that the ground in the Central Circle is hard and rocky, letters cannot be traced in it.)

Though Quiann holds Sab in contempt, and being near her causes Sab almost unbearable grief, their goals are not mutually exclusive. And the characters cannot succeed in their mission for Oinet without the aid of one or the other of these two non-player characters. If the players work this properly, they can probably bring about a happy ending for all concerned (although Sab will be less than thrilled with the state of his love life).

Here is how everything fits together (obviously, players should have to figure this out for themselves):

1) Quiann wants to return home; in order to do this, she needs a password. The players (whether they know it or not) have that password — "Samunota. Return me to my origin." (This is a "master" password which automatically returns anyone uttering it to the place from which he first entered the Darkland.) Riyan printed this on the collar tag of Oinet's brillet as a clue and a test for his nephew. (If the characters can't figure out the password clue, the GM can always have another brillet scurry by at an opportune time, chanting the password.)

2) Sab wants his voice back; only Quiann can get Grundge to give it up, now that Riyan is dead. Ideally, the players will convince Quiann to return with them to Grundge and get the voice back before they give her the password. If Sab puts the voice amulet around his neck, it will

The Portal and the Passwords

Three conditions must be met before the portal will function. First, anyone attempting to use it must be wearing a protective headband of the sort worn by Quiann and Sab (see Headband description).

Second, anyone using the portal must be within the brightly glowing area at the core of the Central Circle (an area with a radius of about six feet). Simply being in the mist is not enough. (GMs may fudge this so that any member of the party will be teleported no matter how far from the glowing area he or she may be. Exercise this option only if characters become separated, or seem too timid about using the portal; don't let your players send one of their number to act as a guinea pig.)

The third and final requirement is that the character attempting to activate the portal must speak a password. There are several types of password. By far the most common is the "specific password." This takes the person who speaks it to one dimension, and one dimension only. Furthermore, they would always be transported to the same location in that dimension. Thus, if the characters in *Lost Inheritance* knew the password for Quiann's realm, they could speak it and go there. Simple.

The second type of password is the "master password." This is a bit harder to come by. It takes the speaker (and others within the glowing core) to the place from which he or she entered the Darkland. Thus, a party consisting of beings who entered the Darkland from a variety of dimensional planes might enter the glow, speak a master password, and find themselves whisked back to their various starting points. This is what happens at the end of this adventure: Quiann is returned to her home dimension; Sab and the player characters are returned to theirs. And all this happened with only one password uttered.

Lastly, there is the "universal password." This unique phrase can take characters anywhere they want to go. This is obviously the most powerful password; mages who possess it don't go around advertising the fact. Characters should discover a mage and gain the password only after the most rigorous test and the most dangerous, protracted campaign you can create.

Feel free to create other passwords. There may be other "master passwords," ones which would take characters back to the place of their birth, or to the destination of the last person to use the portal. You could devise other classes of password which would shuttle characters back and forth in time. The only limits are those imposed by your desires and imagination. GMs can use the passwords as springboards for new adventures; the hunt for passwords could even become the framework for an entire campaign.

vanish and he will be able to speak again. (Before he gives up the amulet, Grundge will say, "Grundge not need voice. Nobody to talk to here anyway.")

If the characters reveal the password before getting Sab's voice back, there is a fifty-fifty chance that Quiann will speak the password immediately and leave poor misunderstood Sab in the lurch.

3) The characters need to find Oinet's inheritance. Quiann can show them an inconspicuous mound located off in the mist near the crevasse; players digging into the hard ground here will find an ordinary cloth bag containing 1000 gold pieces. "That's the old wizard's 'great wealth,'" Quiann says. "I have no use for such trifles."

In fact, this is a decoy treasure, designed to make the characters think they have fulfilled their mission. To find Oinet's true inheritance, they must return to their starting point by entering the glowing mist and speaking the password. The entire glowing mist is, as it turns out, the portal to their own dimension, as well as to Quiann's, and Grundge's, and an infinity of others — but only for those who know the password to a given destination (or one of the "master" passwords, like "Saminota. Return me to my origin").

If the characters enter the glowing mist without Quiann or Sab, nothing will happen, even if they speak the password. In order for the magic of the portal to be activated, the speaker of the password must be wearing a headband of the sort worn by Quiann and Sab. If either of those two is with the party and speaks the password, every living thing within a ten-foot radius (including any unconscious or mute characters) will suddenly feel a falling sensation, which ceases abruptly after a few moments.

The characters find that the mist has vanished; they are in darkness. The least dextrous of the party stumbles, kicking something underfoot. a butter churn. The party is back in the closet in Nringa's house. Quiann, if she entered the portal with them, is gone (returned to her own dimension by the master password). At the characters' feet sits a small, intricately-carved wooden chest containing Ryan's true treasure — Oinet's lost inheritance.

Bands of Protection

These enchanted headbands, made of a strange reddish metal, were constructed by Ryan to protect their wearers from the danger of the Darkland. When worn, they automatically grow or shrink to fit the wearer's head comfortably. Any attack that hits a headband outside the Darkland will destroy it, breaking the enchantment; in the Darkland, however, the headbands are virtually indestructible.



Wearing a headband protects the characters from Night Wings, Black Guardians, brilleets, and other non-sentient monsters, all of which will run (or, in the case of the Guardians, melt) away from the wearer at top speed; wearers are also protected from sinking or falling into the interdimensional void or falling while climbing the Darkwall. It does not protect against attacks by intelligent or semi-intelligent adversaries.

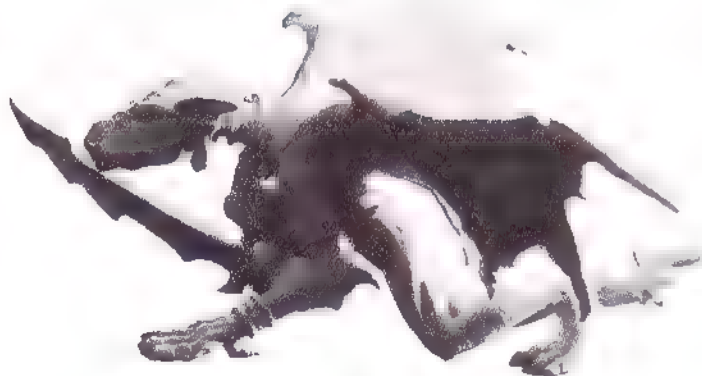
The Treasure

The chest itself is about one foot wide by one foot deep by eight inches tall. Finely made of dark wood with an unusual grain, it is so perfectly constructed it appears to be seamless. The top and sides are carved with images of night creatures and odd symbols (which can be meaningless or can be used as passwords for the Darkland portal — at the GM's discretion). Oinet will regard the chest as a great treasure, prizing its workmanship and apparent seamlessness.

The chest is locked; it will take a woodworker of Oinet's skill to figure out how to open it. (He will be happy to oblige when the players

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return to his cottage with this prize.) Inside, he, and the characters, will find six protective bands like that worn by Quann and Sab, a small cache of jewels and coins (the cash value determined by the GM), and a wristband. This wristband is flat black, cold to the touch, and, on close examination, is found to be made of magically solidified darkness.

Also in the chest is a non-magical scroll. On it, written in a spidery script, is the following message.

To my favored nephew, Oinet:

I congratulate you on achieving your inheritance, which is nothing less than an entire world. The Darkland is dangerous, true, but for those of spirit and ability — both of these qualities which I know you possess in full measure — the land can bring tremendous rewards.

With the wristband in this chest, you will be able to enter the Darkland at will, from wherever you may be in your own world of light and life. Use this powerful ability with caution. Even I, with all my researches, was unable to overcome the debilitating effects of its use. Beware of it; you will grow steadily weaker the more you use it.

Only three in the outside world have ever known of the Darkland's existence: myself, now you, and my former apprentice, Sabristus. Beware of this man. Oinet — though not especially suited to study of the mystical arts, Sabristus is singleminded, devious, and he has reason to seek a return to the Darkland. You are his only means of entrance. I will not elaborate on the circumstances, but Sabristus suffered — through his own unethical actions — a great loss. He may yet attempt to recover it, and revenge himself on the Darkland in the bargain.

My last request to you concerns your sister. Nringa is suspicious by nature, and hard to love; but she means no harm to you or anyone, and her blood is your blood. Do not forget her. She, too, should share in your inheritance.

Aftermath

Oinet will pay the characters fairly, giving them the agreed-upon percentage of the gold. As an alternative, he will offer the headbands

The Wristband

This device will allow the wearer and up to six other characters in the same location to teleport immediately from their current whereabouts to the center ring of the Darkland, just outside the portal of mist. It will also transport whatever the characters can carry. This is an incredibly useful escape device, but it carries a high cost.



Each time a character teleports (or is teleported) using the wristband, he or she suffers a debilitating physical drain and is reduced to a state just above unconsciousness. The lost strength or constitution can be recovered as if it were due to fatigue rather than injury (if your system makes that distinction). Furthermore, all teleported characters suffer a permanent loss — 5% of a character's total hit points for the first and second uses, 10% for the third and fourth, 15% for the fifth and sixth, and so on. (The loss will never be less than one full hit point.)

A character who uses the wristband will feel chilled. The more often characters use the band, the colder they will feel. It won't matter how warmly the characters dress; the feeling of being chilled will never go away.

The wristband will not teleport anyone away from the Darkland. Only a password will make the portal function, and there is no other exit from the Darkland (except by falling through interdimensional space — which may go on forever or open onto other worlds, at the GM's discretion).

and wristband as payment. Though he is frankly curious about the Darkland, and the party's adventure, his wife, Nazru, positively refuses to let him have anything to do with anything magical. (It's against her religion.)

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Sab will probably attempt to leave the party at the earliest opportunity, if he managed to escape with the characters from the Darkland. He will try to steal the wristband at an unguarded moment, seeing it as a way to return to Quiann's side. Despite events in the Darkland, he still loves her (though whether this is sincere or the result of Quiann's charisma and hypnotic power, we may never know). He should prove very persistent; if a GM disapproves of the way a party uses the wristband, Sab could be brought back to hoist it even after months of game time have passed.

Riyan's letter to Oinet might bring about a tearful and touching reunion between Oinet and Nringa, if the GM wishes.

Characters may be able to return to the Darkland through the portal in the closet, they will have to reactivate it. Access to the closet will depend on how friendly Oinet and Nringa feel toward the adventurers. If they are on good terms with the party, they will tolerate occasional incursions at reasonable hours. An interesting idea for the GM to consider is that Oinet's wife might insist the "magical" house be sold — for a good price, of course. A wealthy player character might even buy the house — but Oinet may insist that adequate provision be made for Nringa and her husband. If so, taking care of them might be the premise of another adventure.

Quiann is probably out of the characters' lives forever, though a creative GM might include the password to her realm somewhere in Riyan's chest or, in some obscure way, on the scroll upon which Riyan's last message to Oinet was written. Quiann is a great sorceress in her own dimension, and might be able to summon the party there.

If for some reason the characters decide to cheat Oinet, or simply keep the entire treasure for themselves, Riyan's ghost will haunt them until restitution is made. (Treat Riyan's ghost as among the most powerful spirits possible in your game system.) Riyan's ghost will attack each character who participated in cheating Oinet once a night until all the characters are dead, or the spirit is destroyed (or exorcised). No character who participated in the theft is likely to get an hour's peace — or a moment's sleep — until justice is served. Nringa will have sent word to Oinet that the characters left the house with the chest, so even if the

The Nature of the Darkland

Riyan did not create the Darkland; he was just one of many who discovered it. The Darkland is a "pocket universe" connecting to an infinite number of dimensions through its central portal; it was probably constructed by some unimaginably powerful being or race of beings in eons past. (Referees who favor high-power adventures can build a campaign around the players' search for the (departed?) builders of the Darkland.)

Basically the realm is a "terminal" for magical arrivals and departures. Travellers usually enter at the outer perimeter in the Barren Ring, using a variety of portals or spells; also, sometimes temporary "holes" in the dimensional continuum open up, allowing animals or semi-intelligent creatures to enter (or "fall through") accidentally. The concentric rings of obstacles were constructed to keep such random elements away from the central circle. All departures, of course, are through the central portal. The passwords and headbands are additional strictures to prevent untrained or irresponsible use of the portal.

Riyan discovered the land in his researches; the same researches led him to construct the headbands — other travellers would have different devices which accomplish the same purpose. How Riyan came by the wristband is unknown. He constructed the closet entrance to the Darkland to avoid repeated use of the life-draining wristband.

Players who return to the Darkland on a regular basis might very well encounter other travellers using the portal; this is up to the referee.

ghost is destroyed, Oinet will know he's been cheated and will take measures to get his treasure. (He might, for instance, hire another band of adventurers to go after the characters . . .)

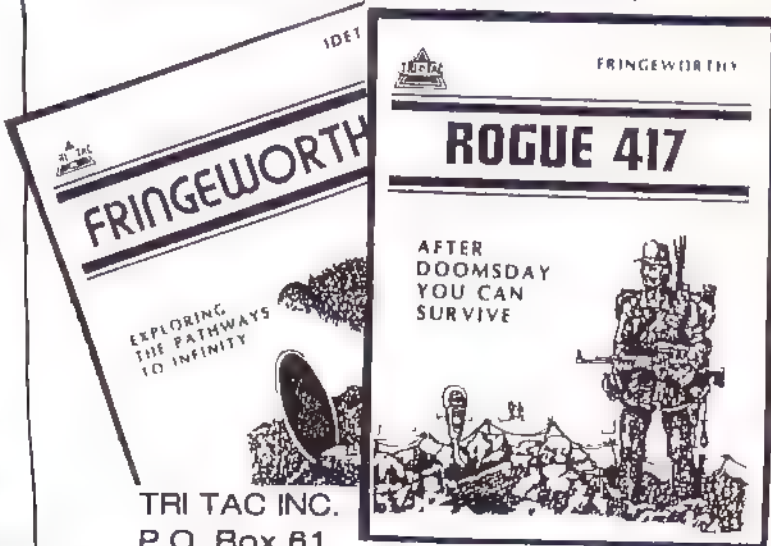
The bracelet will stay with Oinet and his family.

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The Giant Avalon Hill's



Avalon Hill has long been one of the biggest names in the field of historical wargaming, as well as in fantasy and science fiction board-gaming. Now the company is looking to extend its influence into the realm of roleplaying games. And the gaming giant has decided to jump in with both feet, releasing three complete RPG systems in the space of just a few months. The first of these — *Powers & Perils* — is reviewed in this issue of *Fantasy Gamer*. *RuneQuest 3*, AH's version of Chaosium's popular FRPG, is scheduled for release at Gen Con '84. Sandwiched between these two releases is *Lords of Creation*, an RPG which allows gamemasters to take players to any time period, any conceivable setting.

Copies of *RQ3* and *LOC* reached the *SJ* Games offices just before this issue went to press and we thought you deserved a brief peek at Avalon Hill's entire RPG lineup. Previews of these games appear on the following pages: 24 (*Powers & Perils*), 26 (*RuneQuest*), 28 (*Lords of Creation*). Avalon Hill has also begun publication of a new gaming magazine, called *Heroes*. This publication, roleplaying's equivalent of *General* (the venerable AH boardgame magazine), is devoted exclusively to AH's new RPGs. A review of *Heroes* appears on page 26.

Uniting all of these efforts is their surprising mediocrity. Despite having bided its time before leaping into the RPG market, Avalon

One of the most intriguing events of Origins '83 never happened.

Avalon Hill was about to make its long-overdue entry into the roleplaying field. The game was called *Powers & Perils*, and interest ran high; but the game never appeared. People would walk by an empty room where a *P&P* demonstration was scheduled, peer in, and walk away.

Later, after I heard that AH was going to market the third edition of *RuneQuest*, I thought: Aha, *P&P* was shelved in favor of this mighty game. But this was not so. First the ads appeared — not just for *Powers & Perils*, but also for Tom Moldvay's *Lords of Creation*. Then, incredibly enough, a new AH magazine was announced, *Heroes* would cover *P&P*, *RuneQuest*, *Lords of Creation*, and *James Bond 007* — the whole extended "family" of Avalon Hill roleplaying games.

As for *Powers & Perils*, it arrived on my doorstep just as winter was fading. Unfortunately, the excitement I felt as I opened the box quickly gave way to shock and a lingering feeling of disappointment.

Disappointment because *P&P* adds nothing to the genre of fantasy roleplaying games. No new and exciting worlds in which to game; no innovative or gameable systems.

Blurbs & Box-Covers

Let's start with the box. The cover art is serviceable, but not up to TSR's professional standards. There is some information on the back of the box: a you-are-the-adventurer blurb, and a few inaccuracies, such as:

"Systems are simple enough for the total novice to understand and enjoy." Wrong.

Featured Review

Powers & Perils

by Matthew J. Costello

"... without bearing you down in waves of picayune detail." Double wrong.

Still, some of the claims are quite accurate: "*Powers & Perils* provides finely detailed creatures, magical artifacts of all descriptions and magics, both natural and learned, beyond the standard parameters of a fantasy game." Very true. Also: "With *Powers & Perils* you will create highly detailed characters that are dynamic in every way." The most detailed characters I've come across.

The game systems remind me of a math text gone awry. Abbreviations — 58 unfamiliar groups of letters — stalk these pages like demons. Formulas of incredible complexity (for a game, at least) are the crux of nearly every skill and procedure. Rules appear that assume you know certain things which haven't been explained yet.

This is a nightmare

Working through these books — and it is work — was one of the most tedious game activities I've had to do. And always, in the back

of my mind, was the question: Will anybody use this system? And if so, why?

Formulas & Formulas

The system was designed, the ads proclaim, for the "sophisticated" gamer . . . the one, I guess, who can tell a hearty beaujolais from some fizzled-out Ripple. And if there are some rule-devouring "sophisticates" out there who've swallowed every bit of *AD&D*, then they just might be looking for this. The detail is overwhelming.

The Characters' Native Abilities (read: characteristics) are fairly ordinary, with the addition of a few novel ones like Eloquence and Empathy. I won't subject you to a clinical description of the character generation process. Suffice it to say that there are various Multipliers applied to the Abilities to determine the Current Ability . . . which is, of course, less than the calculated Maximum Ability. And there are, of course, Temporary Modifiers affecting certain abilities.

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Jumps In First RPGs

Hill seems to have been unable (or unwilling) to come up with anything unusual or innovative. *Powers & Perils* has been the target of derision from many quarters within the gaming industry: Its rules are condemned as overly complicated and chart-heavy; its layout and graphics are generously described as uninspired. *Lords of Creation* is a fine game for beginners and a good variation on the D&D theme; in fact, LOC is everything D&D should have been a decade ago, but little more. *RuneQuest 3* — reputed to be the best of the Avalon Hill bunch — is a revision of an already existing game. And *Heroes* is unabashedly a house organ.

Frankly, the staff of *Fantasy Gamer* ex-

pected more from Avalon Hill. AH didn't begin to take advantage of the fact that it is a late-comer to the RPG field; opportunities to learn from the mistakes of others seem to have been ignored; if these games are any indication, AH has no awareness of the changes that have taken place in the RPG field during the last ten years. *Powers & Perils*, *Lords of Creation*, *RuneQuest 3*, and *Heroes* may not be bad products — read the reviews, check out the games, and decide for yourself — but they are most assuredly disappointments. And in this day and age, with game companies popping up and fading from the scene almost daily, disappointing products may be worse than no products at all.



Then there are Combat and Magic Factors to be computed, each running to another eight-plus items. Throw in another eight Miscellaneous Factors such as height, weight, age, etc., and your character begins to take shape.

Now I must say, the internal "integrity" of *Powers & Perils* is something else. All the right abilities interact in just the right way. Still, I'd hate to run a campaign with it; character generation alone could be a long evening's activity. Using the formula-bound skills system would be like playing through an IRS audit.

Here is a quick example, just to give you a taste of the rules. At one point, the following statement is made:

"All characters can withstand excessive amounts of damage."

To find out just how much an "excessive amount" of damage is, it is necessary to figure out your character's Damage Tolerance Value (or "DTV" as we P&P'ers call it). Here's the handy-dandy formula:

$(C/20 + StB) \times (1)$ rounded up.

Here's another one — say you're a member of the assassin's guild and you make a deadly hit. Here's how the damage is figured:

$(SB + 1)D10 + (El \text{ (Assassin)} \times 2) + \text{all normal modifiers.}$

What could be easier? Do I see you cringing back there? C'mon, stand up and face the game like an adult! You're not going to let a few hundred formulas scare you off, are you?

And how about tables? You've come to the right place. Some of the tables could be useful in any roleplaying system. The treasure tables are definitely worthwhile and the random encounter tables almost make this game a "perpetual adventure machine." If you love rolling dice, this is your opportunity.

There is a table for everything; three or four to a page in the Character Book. The tables begin to get scrambled with the BOLD typeface and tint highlighted sections until the rules start to read like a Mad Math Professor trying desperately to communicate the dizzying complexity of his beloved subject.

Believe it or not, there are some sections in the game that almost seem accessible. Combat in P&P, the downfall of many another system, is a relatively smooth matter of Offensive Combat Values compared to Defensive Combat Values, with an easy-to-use hit chart. The hits, though, open up another Pandora's Box of formulas. Ranged fire, for example, depends on twin tables on which you compare the modifier (which is based on range and weapon) that is used on the basic Combat table.

Magic is intricate yet playable. The 20 pages of spells include a few gems, and it's easy to figure out if a spell has been successfully cast. However, the use of spells, and the expenditure of Mana, the power behind them, involves yet more math.

Designer & Developer

Creatures, Human Encounters, and Treasure follow, as well as a less-than-thrilling adventure, *County Mordara*.

The Creatures are wonderful. Unfortunately, each one has a list of 20 statistical abbreviations that remain difficult to handle. (Why can I never remember what NF or NWI are?)

The human encounter system is great — different encounters are keyed to different areas of cities and towns. The treasure tables are also keyed to environments, such as ruins, castles, etc. Not only that, but the treasure is broken down into such items as Statues, Books, Tools — hundreds of items that can be described and defined using the appropriate tables. This is the ultimate treasure system.

Among P&P's five books and 200 pages,

there's a scant three pages devoted to the game world. Designer Richard Snider's concept of Upper, Middle, and Lower Worlds is intriguing, but it's merely the outline for a game world. The various places, such as "The Soothing Realm," "The Abyss," and "The Land of the Dark Mind" are not described, and the mythos remains Snider's secret.

The adventure — *County Mordara* —

seemed thrill-less; but then, by this point, I had been defeated by the system. However, the adventure is well laid out and includes an interesting innovation: a listing of the NPC's "current desires," something that helps the gamemaster breathe some life into those characters.

There are some other good things about *Powers & Perils*. Players who demand detail

in their fantasy RPGs will find all they desire (and more, perhaps) here. The character system alone provides a rich "phenotype," as Snider calls it. The three-tiered system of worlds may be grossly undeveloped but it is appealing. The logical nature of characteristics is . . . well, logical. Finally, as a source book for fantasy gamemasters *P&P* has much to offer.

But as a roleplaying game it cries out for

A Glimpse at

RuneQuest 3

by David Dunham

At Gen Con this August, Avalon Hill is scheduled to release the 3rd Edition of Chaosium's *RuneQuest*, a fantasy roleplaying game which emphasizes realistic adventurers and cultures. I got to see an advance copy.

RuneQuest 3 characters have the usual set of characteristics (STR, INT, DEX, etc.), but what really defines a character are his skills. Characters are given a rating from 0 to 100 in skills such as weapon use (different weapons have different ratings, thus a master of broadsword may not know which end of a mace to hold), Climb, Ride, Fast Talk, different languages, Craft, Lore, Sleight, Search, and Sneak. To successfully use a skill, the player must roll his character's skill rating or less on percentile dice. Special rules cover criticals (especially good rolls) and fumbles (exceedingly bad rolls). The better you are with a skill, the more hours of training you'll need to get any better. Successful use of a skill gives the possibility of learning from experience.

Combat is probably *RuneQuest*'s slowest (but most accurate) feature, especially between tough opponents. Characters get one attack per round (exceptional warriors two), and can choose to roll either their Parry or Dodge skill against their opponent's attack. If a blow lands, it hurts a specific body part. It's more common to be taken out of a battle by losing, say, the use of both legs than by dying, which is a good thing because *RuneQuest* characters (like real people) can easily be killed by a couple good sword chops.

RuneQuest provides three different magic systems — Spirit Magic, Divine Magic, and Sorcery — usable by any character (subject to cultural limitations — it might prove difficult to find a sorcerer on the tundra or a shaman in a metropolis). Typical Spirit Magic spells temporarily enchant a weapon, heal wounds, light fires, locate specific substances, or protect against damage. Divine Magic reflects the nature of a particular deity; examples include *Bless Crops*, *Resurrection*, and *Thunderbolt*. Sorcery allows spells to be combined in different strengths, but simple examples are *Fly*, *Regenerate*, and *Teleport*. Each of the three types of magicians can use rituals to summon creatures or create permanently enchanted items (at a cost to characteristics).

RuneQuest has very good definitions of the different types of cultures which could be encountered in a fantasy setting: Savage, Nomadic, Barbarian, or Civilized. Characters start out with different skills depending on which culture they grew up in, and can learn additional skills or magic in pre-adventuring experience. Since there are no character classes (Marx would approve), the cultures provide role models, as do the religions.

The economic system is the best I have ever seen, taking into account the price of goods in different sorts of markets (a suit of plate armor is reasonably priced in the large city where it was made, expensive in a small city, and usually unavailable in a rural community). The standards of living for different economic classes are included, so the gamemaster can get a feel for how much treasure to parcel out (probably not all that much).

Creatures have their own book, with a short listing for each one. Many of them can be used as player characters, so brief cultural background tables are given. *RuneQuest* provides mostly the monsters we've come to expect in a fantasy game: dragons, orcs, half-lings, centaurs, elves, giants. There are a few unique beings: broos, conchons, grampuses, and a bunch of different spirits.

To keep fans of the 2nd Edition happy, Avalon Hill will be producing a booklet on Glorantha, the fantasy world-setting of previous *RuneQuest* products. This provides a sample religion (Ernalda), as

Avalon Hill Debuts New RPG Magazine

by Scott Haring

Avalon Hill's *Heroes* magazine is supposed to cover AH's role-playing games the same way *General* magazine covers their board games — exclusively and lovingly.

Heroes is mostly dedicated to four games — *Lords of Creation*, *Powers & Perils*, *James Bond 007* (by Victory Games), and the new *RuneQuest*. If you play any of these games, *Heroes* will be a valuable addition to your reading list; if you don't play any of these games, it's a waste of time at best.

The first issue features a complete adventure for *Lords of Creation* called "Survival Run of the Starnomads," written by LOC designer Tom Moldvay. "Survival Run" is a fine adventure, complete with new monsters, a fully-developed society, a wide range of technology, and a good mixture of hack-and-slash and thinking (one of the keys to getting through one particular room is solving a cryptogram). It's also well organized, with a good-looking four-color map. I don't play LOC (at least not yet), and I'm thinking of ways to adapt the adventure to the systems I do play. It's that good.

The other major articles include the first of a four-part "History

the strong hand of a developer. Some things would have to go, but the system — its detail and structure — might have been saved. Unfortunately, *P&P* was "developed" by the designer. This reminds me of the old adage that says any lawyer who defends himself has a fool for a client.

Perhaps *Powers & Perils* is exactly the way Richard Snider wants it. But surely he must

have wanted his mythos in this game . . . surely more than just three pages? He couldn't have thought a new number-crunching roleplaying game was needed.

I don't know. But when I think of the hours Snider must have spent on this game, I almost hope that in some bizarre, unimaginable way, it's a masterpiece.

But I doubt it.

POWERS & PERILS (Avalon Hill); \$24.00. Designed by Richard Snider. Contents include four rulebooks, one scenario, a pad of character record sheets, two ten-sided dice. Players and playing time indefinite.

Published 1984.

FS

well as several beings unique to Glorantha, including the enigmatic dragonets, who use their own magic system

This edition of *RuneQuest* cleans up many of the flaws in previous editions, and provides a wealth of information about different cultures, rather than being explicitly (as in the 2nd Edition) or implicitly (as in *D&D*) tied to one particular one. It provides a maximum of flexibility in an elegant design.

Comparing *RuneQuests*

Character Creation

Charisma has been replaced by APPEARANCE, and SIZE and INTELLIGENCE are now 2d6+6 for humans, allowing more rational values for small, stupid nonhumans. There's a new improved system for characteristic increases. While character creation is essentially identical, previous experience, which is culture-specific, is now based on gaining a number of percentage points per year in various skills. You get more choice, so it takes a bit longer.

Skills

All skills are now on a full percentile system. There is a new category (Agility) and several skills have been changed or renamed

2nd Edition	3rd Edition
Hide Item	Sleight
Pick Pockets	Sleight
Lock Picking	Devise
Trap Set/Disarm	Devise
Spot Hidden Item	Scan
Spot Trap	Search
Camouflage	Conceal
Hide in Cover	Hide
Move Silently	Sneak

of the Lunar Empire," Gloranthan history for *RuneQuest* fans, and a "translation" of a travel diary through an area in the *Powers & Perils* universe, written by *P&P* designer Richard Snider.

The single least necessary piece in the first issue is an article called, "So What's So Great About *Powers & Perils*?" Written by the "somewhat biased" (in his own words) Richard Snider, the article is little more than a three-page advertisement for the new game. While supporting your products is the purpose of a house organ, hyping them shamelessly should be left off the list.

Slipping into the mix are a couple of short pieces on other Avalon Hill games, including a one-page strategy article on *Amoeba Wars* and a short scenario for *Dune*, as well as industry news (concentrating on the good play AH games were receiving in the mainstream press), a convention listing, and a writer's guide.

The graphics in this new magazine are quite good, with excellent maps (some in four color) and good use of color elsewhere. I wish there was more art, especially in the smaller articles (some of which had no art whatsoever). Overall, the magazine's a good value for those who play the games it covers; for those who don't, well . . . Avalon Hill isn't that interested in you, anyway.

HEROES magazine; (Avalon Hill), \$3.00; subscriptions \$12.00 for one year, \$18.00 for two. Edited by William E. Peschel. 48 pages. Published bimonthly. First issue published 1984.

Training one hour per percentage point of skill gains you either d6-2% or 2%, your choice. You can also learn from experience, or attempt to research (practice) a skill.

Combat

There are now 10 Strike Ranks (SR) per Melee Round (MR). This affects things like drawing a weapon or reloading a bow, now 3 SR. You can choose two of three options each MR: Attack, Parry, and Dodge. Dodging allows you to be where an attack isn't. Your Dodge chance is reduced by your ENCumbrance. A Special Dodge is required to avoid a Special Attack, and a Critical Dodge to avoid a Critical Attack.

Parrying implements have armor points. If an attack exceeds these points, excess damage goes to the parrier, and the armor points are reduced by one. A Special Parry means the parrying weapon or shield takes no damage. A Critical Parry prevents any damage to the parrier, even against a Critical Attack. Armor is handled the same way, but the values have changed slightly. Armor now has ENC and is obtained based on your SIZ.

Anyone who is dealt damage greater than his SIZ is subject to knockback of one meter per excess five points, and must roll DEXterity x 5% or fall down. You can also try to Knockback instead of Attack by matching STRength + SIZ against your opponent's SIZ + DEX. There are different hit location charts for missile weapons

RuneQuest now has Fatigue Points, equal to STR + CONstitution - ENC. Subtract one FP each round. Negative FP reduces all percentile rolls. When negative points equal STR + CON, you will fall unconscious due to exhaustion. You recover d3+1 FP each round you do nothing which uses them.

Incapacitation and severing are no longer separate. If one of your limbs loses double its original hit points it is permanently severed or maimed. You will go into shock, and lose any positive Fatigue Points.

Critical Hits do maximum damage and ignore armor (but not parries). Critical Hits are also Special Hits. Special Hits with impaling weapons do twice the rolled damage, and the weapon may get stuck in the impalee. Special Hits from a smashing or slashing weapon do a knockback in addition to normal damage.

Magic

Your ENC subtracts from your chance of spell casting under all three systems. There is a new attribute, Magic Points. These points are used instead of POW to cast spells, and in the resistance roll.

To cast a Spirit Magic spell, roll your POW x 5% - ENC. If unsuccessful, the spell failed, but still mark off one Magic Point. If successful, the spell worked; mark off the appropriate number of MP. You can bring your MP total to 0 and fall unconscious. Most spells have a range of 50 meters and last five minutes (25 melee rounds). Basically the same spell list applies; the selection may be limited depending on culture and religion.

Divine Magic, which is one-use for Initiates, reusable for Priests, has a 100% - ENC chance. The normal range is 100 meters, the duration 15 minutes. Initiates are expected to sacrifice POW for Divine Magic, but the selection is generally more restrictive than before.

Sorcery is the most powerful and flexible of the three magic systems. You learn each spell as a separate skill, as well as the magic skills necessary to cast spells simultaneously, or for different durations, ranges, or intensities. Sorcery spells are quite varied, but can only be learned in a Civilized area

Spirits are now handled differently, and they are less potent if bound by an adventurer

Character Conversion

It's possible to convert existing characters, but they don't come out the same. Generally they become less powerful, as fits the new rules. *Rune Lords* suffer most, since that status is not defined at all in the new rules.

FS



Preview

LORDS OF CREATION

by Warren Spector

Lords of Creation seems destined to occupy a rather curious niche in the RPG market: it can in no way be described as particularly innovative; it is packaged like the high-bucks game it is, and yet it is rife with typos and errors, making it appear as if the rules weren't proofread before going to the printer; its greatest selling point — its adaptability to any sort of campaign, whether past, present, future, or pure fantasy — is also its major flaw.

The game comes in a sturdy cardboard box, with reasonably attractive artwork. Inside the box, potential *Lords of Creation* will find two nicely laid-out booklets — one containing rules, and a second listing hundreds of creatures and non-player characters. Also included in the purchase price are three dice (a six-sided die, a ten-sided die, and a twenty-sided die).

Opening the 64-page rules booklet, the players will find a straightforward — one might almost say old-fashioned — RPG system. Each character has five basic ability scores, determined by rolling 2d20: Muscle, Speed, Stamina, Mental, and Luck. Adding all of these scores and dividing the sum by ten gives a Personal Force score; averaging Muscle, Speed, and Stamina gives a Physical Score.

The Physical score determines a character's basic chance to hit an opponent in combat. The Physical score or less must be rolled on 1d20 in order to hit successfully. (There are, of course, modifiers for armor, range, movement,

weapon type, and the like.) The combat system is simple, emphasizing playability over strict realism.

Personal Force determines both a character's "Title" (or level), and the number and level of individual skills that character can acquire. The object of *Lords of Creation* is to acquire ever-more-impressive Titles, ranging from Neophyte (anyone with a Personal Force from one to 10) to Lord of Creation (anyone with a Personal Force of 101 or better). In all, there are eleven Titles, with each conferring a new skill (and increased Life/Hit Points) upon the characters.

Skills, acquired as a result of earning new Titles, range from the relatively innocuous Dimensional Sight (the ability to see other-worldly creatures) to the awe-inspiring Construction, which allows players to create whole universes (in essence, forcing them to become GMs themselves, thus ensuring both continuity and variety from game to game).

Lords of Creation also includes a list of 21 skill categories (or Professions), independent of the Title Abilities. Each Profession includes five individual skills, ranked in order of complexity. The Medical profession, for example, includes such skills as the first level General Practice, the second level Anaesthesiology, third level Psychiatry, fourth level Surgery, and fifth level Futuristic and/or Magical medicine. The skill list is fairly comprehensive (if a

bit vague in the actual use of the various skills), and covers everything from Espionage and Combat to Theatrics and Magic.

Personal Force points offer characters some choice as to the skills they acquire; one with eight PF points might choose to allocate four of them in order to acquire Pistol 1 and Automatic Rifle 3. The last four points could be spent acquiring the fourth level Medical skill — Surgery (which would also give the character the three lower level medical skills).

Lords of Creation comes packaged with a *Book of Foes* — over 450 potential creatures and characters for players to encounter. The *Book of Foes* indicates the adaptability of *LOC*, including as it does Gremlins, Dinosaurs, Sinbad the Sailor, Thor, and just about anyone or anything else you can think of.

Adaptability is one of the great strengths of the *LOC* system. Tom Moldvay, the designer and developer of the game, has seen fit to include rules (sketchy though they may be at times) for every possible situation. You can really adventure in a magical realm one week and find yourself in the 21st century the next.

For newcomers to role-playing this flexibility makes *LOC* ideal. For old-timers already attached to a "dedicated" system (one specifically designed for modern, fantasy, or superhero adventures, but not all of the above), *LOC* may be just what the doctor *didn't* order. In trying to be all things to all people, *LOC* falls short of what most experienced gamers expect.

So, let's assume *LOC* is aimed at new gamers. What does it offer? Well, wonderfully detailed tables of contents make it easy for GMs and players to find their way around; rules are always at your fingertips. The rules themselves offer lots of information new GMs and players might need. A fairly extensive portion of *LOC* is devoted to world descriptions. This section includes maps, characters, chronologies, creatures, and everything else a GM would need to know to get started adventuring in six very different kinds of universes. A newcomer to RPGs would have to look far and wide for a better introduction to the hobby than *LOC*.

Unfortunately, this marvelous introductory system is marred by countless typos, ungrammatical constructions, poor organization, and out-and-out errors. The rules refer to character sheets, a GM's reference screen, and an adventure — *The Horn of Roland* — which are not included in the basic package. (Rumor has it these items were pulled at the last minute, for release separately. Do I hear the sound of cash registers ringing their merry tune?) These problems are unpardonable, especially when the game comes from a company with Avalon Hill's experience and expertise.

My initial impression of *Lords of Creation* was that the game was hopelessly mediocre — good at some things but great at none. As its utility as a beginner's game became apparent, however, I grew more and more impressed with *LOC*. Overall, I'd now have to say *Lords of Creation* is worth the asking price of \$25.00. Avalon Hill has done a good job here; the second edition (if one ever appears) could be great.

FB

Letters



Proffering Cloaks and Mantles

Greg Costikyan's letter in issue 4 of *Fantasy Gamer* cries out for a reply from the "other side." Allow me to state at the outset that I have no quibble with Greg's woeful lament as it might apply to him, as I have never sat in judgement of one of his designs. However, I do object strenuously to his painting the plight of all game designers in such woe-begotten colors. Like all one-sided arguments, his proffers a cloak of respect and pity to all designers as a general classification which few of them currently deserve. This is not a new argument and has been capably recounted by both sides in past issues of your sister publication, *F&M*. However, for the benefit of the *Fantasy Gamer's* considerably different readership I feel a representation of the publisher's side of this story is in order.

Reducing the argument to its lowest common denominator, Greg laments the fact that the adventure gaming establishment does not give game designers income, publicity, and credit more in proportion to that enjoyed by authors in the book industry. My response, reduced to its simplest terms, is that they generally don't deserve it. Authors are almost totally responsible for their finished product. In contrast, based on my 12 years of experience in the game publishing field, game designers seldom solely account for even half of their final product. An author's manuscript is simply edited, typeset, and perhaps illustrated upon acceptance. On the other hand, a game design must undergo rigorous quality control tests, including thousands of man-hours of testing to see if it "works." Rules must be checked for completeness and accuracy; when was the last time a book had to be checked to see if a sentence in the first chapter conflicted with a statement in the last? A book must be read but once to determine if it is good and worthy of publication; a game must be playtested virtually dozens of times to check for "perfect solutions" and "play balance" — a problem often made more difficult by the many games which offer dozens of permutations to their play in the form of scenarios. Book publishers need concern themselves only with printed pages and perhaps an occasional illustration; game publishers must also deal with often intricately involved maps, hundreds upon hundreds of die-cut counters subject to rejection for poor cuts, and a host of other game components. I think even the most biased judge would have to admit that the plight of the game publisher is far worse than that of the book publisher. Is it any wonder then that royalties in the one field often don't match the other? Note that when the game designer assumes sole responsibility for these many factors, his royalties rise accordingly. It is

standard practice in the computer games field for game designers to receive royalties much more akin to that of authors — and rightly so, for their programming expertise is generally the entire product; if their program doesn't work, it isn't bought. If it is bought, it is often the only item of substance in the product.

But I digress. My main contention is not that game publishers cannot afford to pay game designers, but that the majority of so-called "professional game designers" in the adventure game industry are incapable or unwilling to submit a finished, polished product. I cannot recall a single game design (not previously published elsewhere) submitted to Avalon Hill during my 12 years as head of the R&D Dept. which did not require at least as much work by an in-house developer as was done by the designer. In many cases, games were totally redesigned by our staff, while the "designer" was given credit and payment for the design even though his contribution was frequently little more than an idea or outline of the final product. More than one so-called "professional game designer" owes his reputation to an unknown developer who saved his bacon by turning a sow's ear into a silk purse with thousands of hours of hard work. Within the past year we have had to cancel two new releases indefinitely because they simply didn't work and were historically inaccurate to boot — games submitted by previously published designers in the adventure gaming field who consider themselves professional game designers. When these people were informed of the problems with their designs — obvious and serious flaws — they merely shrugged their shoulders and asked when the game would be published; they wanted to be paid. They apparently didn't care that their product was flawed or that gamers would be shelling out cash for a defective game. It was, in their words, "not their problem." They designed the game — it was up to Avalon Hill to develop it — and when could they expect their first royalty check?

This is a substantially different picture of the game designer than the one painted by Mr. Costikyan, is it not? This kind of attitude has left me with a rather short fuse when I see designers complaining in print about how they are mistreated. I agree with Mr. Costikyan that a "professional designer" should be treated better; I just haven't met a professional freelance designer yet. When I find one capable of giving me an enjoyable, accurate, fully-developed, and tested game ready to be printed as submitted, I will not only give him a royalty comparable to that of an author, I will shout his name from the rooftops. Believe me, I'd love to do business with such a "professional"; it would make my job a cinch. In the meantime, the search goes on. I say to the

designers of our hobby to stop their complaining and start cleaning up their act so that they deserve the respect of professionals. Send me a game that you've researched which will withstand even one trip to the library by one of my evaluators. Send me a game that you know how to play because you've played it yourself dozens of times; don't embarrass us both when I discover you cannot even play your own game. Send me a game that has been tested by people other than yourself using written rules, and not your over-the-shoulder coaching. The latter works very nicely, but I've yet to find a way to put a miniature clone of the game designer in every box to explain how the game is played or was meant to be played. Send me a set of rules that won't draw blushes from a grade school grammarian. Do all of these things and I will treat you royally . . . as you deserve, because I don't want to take a chance on losing your services in the future.

Let me state once more that this should not be construed as an attack on Mr. Costikyan. I just feel he overstates his case in a very one-sided manner. I also plead ignorance in the matter of the design of fantasy role playing games and it may well be true that the designers of such games deserve more credit or recompense than they currently receive. I do not know. My argument lies solely with the assuaging mantle he proffers to game designers as a whole, especially as it applies to my area of experience. There are designers in the field capable of embracing all the areas of professional design alluded to above; there are even some that do. However, they are few and far between, and subject to the same malady that game reviewers are all too quick to attribute to publishers — rushing a game into print without doing all of their homework — or more to the point, not being willing to do it if they can con the publisher into doing it for them.

Greg is offbase when he states that "Avalon Hill has agreed to publish designers' names at the end of game rules only under severe pressure." During my stay here, it has been common practice to always include Design, Development, and even Playtesting credits in the rules of every game. The proof of this statement can be found in virtually any AH rulebook of the past 12 years. He is correct that we refuse to publish designers' names on game boxes and he correctly, although in a roundabout way, states why: we would prefer customers to buy games based on publisher identification. We are proud that the AH label stands for a quality guarantee to many of our customers. Why should we adorn the name of the designer on our packages when that name may be associated with an earlier or later effort by that designer for another company with less rigorous quality control measures? It is our contention that an AH game is the product of a team effort — supported by company personnel in many different departments. We feel that an AH game has its own standard of quality. Just because designer X has had a less-than-successful product for a competing publisher doesn't mean that his AH game should be associated with that substandard effort. Whatever bias exists in the marketplace (and I don't believe it is much of a factor) for or against a particular designer can be negated by the anonymity of an AH label, which means that it has passed our minimum standards for acceptability. Given the efforts of some designers, they should be pleased to be offered the protection of this anonymity. One of these days I'm going to put a designer's name on the cover, but when I do that it will be because I've published his game exactly as he submitted it. I'm also going to publish his address and make payment of his royalties contingent on his answering all the rules questions and complaints his game creates. Now *that* strikes me as true justice!

Don Greenwood
Vice President, R&D
The Avalon Hill Game Company

Fantasy Gamer

Reader Survey



If you've already checked out the "Blood On My Typewriter" page, you know that this is the last issue of *Fantasy Gamer*. (If you haven't read the announcement, by all means do so!) Now, it may seem odd to be running a Reader Survey in the last issue of a magazine, but we have our reasons. You see, *Fantasy Gamer* isn't really ending; it's just moving, merging with *Space Gamer*. We have no intention of abandoning our fantasy fans. By finding out what we were doing right in *FG*, we can make sure we continue to do those things in the "new" *Space Gamer*. Conversely, telling us what you didn't like about *FG* will insure that those things don't show up in *Space Gamer*.

This is your opportunity to tell us what sort of magazine you want the new *Space Gamer* to be. Take a minute to answer the questions below, marking your responses on the bind-in card in the center of the magazine.

Make sure your name and address are printed on the card! If you don't write your name and address on the card, you won't be eligible for our big prize drawing. On October 16, 1984, we'll select five of your response cards at random. Each of the lucky people whose cards are drawn will receive a \$15.00 certificate, redeemable on any direct-mail order. You can cash it in on any Steve Jackson Games products — games, game supplements, Card-board Heroes; you can even use the certificate to cover the cost of a subscription to *Space Gamer*, *Autoduel*

Quarterly, or *Fire & Movement*. (If you already subscribe, use it to extend your subscription.)

You benefit; we benefit; everyone benefits; so send in your responses today!

1. Are you:
 - (1) Male
 - (2) Female
2. Estimate your annual income:
 - (3) Less than \$5,000
 - (4) \$5,001 to \$10,000
 - (5) \$10,001 to \$15,000
 - (6) \$15,001 to \$20,000
 - (7) \$20,001 to \$25,000
 - (8) Over \$25,000
3. How many years of formal education have you had?
 - (9) 0-8
 - (10) 9-12
 - (11) 13-14
 - (12) 15-16
 - (13) 17+
4. Which Steve Jackson Games publications do you subscribe to?
 - (14) None
 - (15) *Fantasy Gamer*
 - (16) *Space Gamer*
 - (17) *Autoduel Quarterly*
 - (18) *Fire & Movement*
5. How many people (besides yourself) read your copy of *Fantasy Gamer*?
 - (19) None

- (20) One
- (21) Two
- (22) Three
- (23) Four
- (24) Five or more

6. How do you obtain *Fantasy Gamer*?
 - (25) Buy it in a store
 - (26) Subscribe
 - (27) Borrow a friend's copy
7. What do you do with your copy of *Fantasy Gamer* when you finish reading it?
 - (28) Always save it
 - (29) Sometimes save it
 - (30) Give it to a friend
 - (31) Throw it away
8. Do you own a computer?
 - (32) Yes
 - (33) No
9. If you answered "no" to #8, do you have access to one?
 - (34) Yes
 - (35) No
10. What kind of computer do you own or have access to?
 - (36) Apple
 - (37) Atari
 - (38) IBM
 - (39) Commodore/Vic
 - (40) TI
 - (41) Other
11. Do you play games on your home computer?
 - (42) Yes
 - (43) No
12. Would you like to see more, fewer, or the same amount of computer-related reviews and articles in the new *Space Gamer*?
 - (44) More
 - (45) Fewer
 - (46) Same amount
 - (47) None at all
13. How many games and gaming products (boardgames, roleplaying games, supplements, scenarios, play-aids, etc.) did you buy last year?
 - (48) 0-2
 - (49) 3-5
 - (50) 6-10
 - (51) 11-15
 - (52) 16-19
 - (53) 20+
14. Have you ever purchased a product or entered a play-by-mail game because of an ad in *Fantasy Gamer*?
 - (54) Yes
 - (55) No

15. How many hours do you spend each week playing boardgames, roleplaying games, and computer games?

- (56) 0-5
- (57) 6-10
- (58) 11-19
- (59) 20+

16. How many science fiction or game conventions did you attend last year?

- (60) None
- (61) 1-3
- (62) 4-9
- (63) 10+

17. Do you buy miniature figures?

- (64) Frequently
- (65) Sometimes
- (66) Rarely
- (67) Never

18. Do you use miniature figures as a roleplaying game-aid?

- (68) Frequently
- (69) Sometimes
- (70) Rarely
- (71) Never

19. Would you like to see more fiction in the new *Space Gamer*, less fiction, the same amount of fiction, or no fiction at all?

- (72) More
- (73) Less
- (74) The same
- (75) No fiction

20. Should gaming notes accompany the fiction which appears in the new *Space Gamer*?

- (76) Yes, always
- (77) As often as possible but not absolutely necessary
- (78) Only in selected cases
- (79) No, I just like the stories
- (80) I don't want any fiction

21. Do you prefer "generic" scenarios (playable with any roleplaying system) or "system-specific" scenarios?

- (81) Generic
- (82) System-specific
- (83) No preference

22. Rate the following columns and regular features on a scale of 1 to 9 (with a score of 9 meaning you really love the column, and a score of 1 meaning you wouldn't mind seeing it used as a bird-cage liner).

- (84) Murphy's Rules
- (85) Blood on My Typewriter
- (86) Keeping Posted
- (87) PBM Update
- (88) Village Idiot

- (89) Capsule Reviews
- (90) Letters

23. List your favorite roleplaying games in order of preference.

24. List the best articles you read in *Fantasy Gamer* during the last year in order of preference.

25. List the best games or scenarios you read in *Fantasy Gamer* during the last year in order of preference.

26. What don't you like about *Fantasy Gamer*?

27. What is the most enjoyable aspect of *Fantasy Gamer*?

28. List any games about which you would like to read articles.

29. If you could change anything about *Fantasy Gamer*, what would it be?

30. What other gaming magazines do you buy or read regularly?

31. How old are you?

32. What is your occupation?

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Keeping
Posted

Terra II

Review by Chris Frink

I wasn't sure about Clemens and Associates' PBM *Terra II* at first. The premise was interesting, but didn't promise much action — and I was looking for action. In the game you play the leader of a small tribal band. The winters in your homeland have been lengthening for a generation; the land is not able to support all of the tribe. You have been selected to lead a group of fellow tribesmen to better weather and more fruitful land. Each player starts off with an equal number of points to spend on equipping a tribe. You choose everything from people, horses, and cattle to food, wagons, and swords.

After outfitting your small tribe you head out (either south or north, depending on which hemisphere you start from). But you have no idea what terrain lies ahead — there are no maps or charts. At first, I thought I'd much rather know what I was getting my people into. But after a couple of turns, I got all wrapped up in mapping and exploring the new land. This "limited intelligence" turned out to be one of my favorite features of the game. I looked forward to receiving my next turn so I could add to the color-coded map I was making.

There are 23 kinds of terrain in the *Terra II* world. Terrain is a combination of elevation and condition: there are snow-capped High Mountains; Jungled-covered Low Mountains; rolling, Grassy Hills; Flat Desert. The game even has Volcanoes, Swamps, Oceans, and Inlets. The combinations cover almost every kind of terrain imaginable. Hexes are 10 miles across. Each tribe (or scouting party) is assigned movement points at the beginning of each two week-long turn — 20 for those on foot; 30 for mounted groups. Each terrain combination has its own cost; they vary from 10 for Snowy, Low Mountains, to 7 for Arid Hills, and 5 for Grassy Hills. As you can see, your tribe won't be travelling very far each fortnight — 60 miles if they are riding over the prairie; 20 miles if they are slogging across snowy mountains on foot.

There are no deadlines in *Terra II*. Turns can be sent in as fast as they can be filled out. Turn-around time is a dependable one week — sometimes less if you're lucky and the post office is on your side. At first, filling out turn cards takes a week, or so it seems. Turns are sent in on three computer cards (often called bubble cards) using a binary number code. The code was tough to get used to, but I did; after eight or ten turns it was a snap. Some

players may take right to the code (especially computer junkies); others may be put off completely.

Players receive their turns as two- or three-page computer printouts. These aren't just dull status reports, but narrative descriptions of the tribe's travels and actions. At the end of the printout is an inventory of everything the tribe has. Some of these narratives can be good reading, considering that they are completely computer generated. When I was crossing a great prairie, I got the idea of the monotony from the report: "The tribe moved south as had been planned. It entered a large, flat prairie covered with tall grass. Although trees were rare, water was plentiful. The tribe moved . . . they entered a large, flat prairie covered . . . The tribe moved . . ." Well, you get the idea.

The land seemed awfully big. I wasn't running into any other tribes, but I was enjoying the game — it challenged me. I discovered how difficult it is to keep a tribe fed, healthy, and alive out in the wilderness. I had to contend with disease, weather and enemies. A few early poor choices had my population dropping sharply. I learned to dump the sick (they only spread disease) and avoid fighting (my untrained, under-armored soldiers got cut to ribbons). I began to pay more attention to building my tribe's skill levels.

Skills

One of *Terra II*'s nifty features is the skill development system. There are 12 skills to improve upon. They range from those important to survival (like Hunting, Herding, and Healing) to those important to a tribe starting a village (like Refining, Engineering, and Sanitation). Other skills (like Leadership, Training, or Religion) have intangible, but positive, effects on anything the tribe undertakes. Still others (like Forestry, Weapon Making, or Mining) have direct effects: The higher the skill, the more tribe members can work on a particular project, or the more sophisticated products can be produced.

Each tribe starts out with a Herding 1 skill. Skill levels range from 0 to 9. One attempt per turn may be made to raise one skill one level. The higher the current rating for that skill, the harder it is to raise; each level takes 10% off the chance of success. (For instance, there is a 40% chance a Mining 6 can be upped to Mining 7).

Deciding on where to concentrate development is tough, considering you don't know what you're up against at the start of the game. I decided to stick with the survival-oriented skills at first. Since a tribe depends on its herds for food and transportation, I decided to develop herding. I did this at the expense of Scouting, Healing, Leadership, and Training. After my herds were growing fast enough I set out to build up some of the other important skills; though with so many deserving choices, it was difficult figuring out where to concentrate. Looking back, I wish I'd Trained my tribe more — it has a positive effect on their fighting ability. I first learned that well-armed but untrained (and unarmored) soldiers don't fare well against professional-looking warriors wearing breastplates when my tribe ran across one in the random encounter that happens at the end of every turn. Each of these threats or opportunities offers five solutions ranging from radical to conservative. Well, this guy with a sword and spear rode into camp and asked if he could buy one of our women for ten gold pieces. My options ranged from making the sale to asking him to leave or having him attacked. Feeling bold, I ordered him killed; he calmly wasted three of my guards before trotting off into the sunset.

There seems to be well over a dozen different encounters. Enough to keep things interesting — for awhile. The longer the game goes on, the more they are repeated. And repeated. And repeated. There is one fellow who offers to buy your herbs; no matter how many times you give him the brushoff he'll pop up at the end of another turn, offering to buy your herbs. These encounters can net all sorts of good stuff — armor and weapons, experience, information, or new tribe members — but the repetition makes them seem old and moldy after awhile.

Your tribefolk will stumble across all sorts of other goodies, too. They will bring gems, coins, candles, or brandy back to camp. People looking around the camp are apt to find rope, cotton bales, honey, weapons, or armor (to mention a few). After your tribe has spent a couple of months in the field they will be carrying around quite a load. Most of these things are not directly useful (the rules make no provision for eating honey or sewing shirts), but they can be sold — either to other tribes (unlikely, as most are as poor as you), or to merchants in cities. Sooner or later your tribe will come upon sign posts pointing the way to a city. Once there, you will be given a list of things the local merchants will buy or sell and the prices. Now you find out all the brandy or wine you've been lugging around for the last few hundred miles (and haven't been able to enjoy) is worth a minor fortune. With all that gold you can send your warriors shopping for weapons and armor!

Combat

Besides getting into fights as a result of random encounters, you can do battle with other tribes. As opposed to the random encounter solutions, you have some say in tactics when attacked (or defending against) another

tribe. After weapons are distributed (a force may consist of any combination of infantry, cavalry, or archers), a tribe's force is spread across the battle front using an ingenious system. Each front has five sectors; a tribal leader can concentrate soldiers in any way possible across that front. As leader, you also choose how bad things must get before retreat is sounded, when to attack, and if you want to pillage the enemy camp if victorious.

The tricky part about working out battle plans is that they have to be worked out in advance — there is no time for changes once a fight has been decided on. Leaders cannot alter plans, except between battles. There is no time to plan for a defense once you've been attacked — the battle is resolved the same turn it is engaged. This means a tribe must always have a solid plan for defense in place.

Combat is bloody. So many factors are taken into account: weapons and armor; training, experience and leadership; weather and terrain — it's hard to say how they affect the battle. The system is simple enough to allow for thousands of results, and Clemens' program handles the complexity very well. As in real life, combat is not something to be casually entered into in *Terra II*. Results are hard to predict and losses are hard to replace. I considered tribesfolk my greatest resource and would not endanger them without a very good reason.

Summary

Terra II is one of the more flexible PBMs around — there is so much to do and see. The combat system allows players almost unlimited ways to equip and use their forces. Because of the options offered, players can have their tribes be almost anything they want: fierce cavalry raiders, precious-metal miners, peaceable sod-busters, or wandering traders; the structure is there. As an example of the game's built-in flexibility: A tribe that raises its Weapon Making skill high enough may try to develop firearms!

Clemens and Associates are flexible too. They have made changes in the game that make it easier and more enjoyable to play.

The only change made so far that I haven't been that crazy about is raising the turn fee from \$3.00 to \$3.50. Clemens and Associates say the price will not be raised again in the foreseeable future.

And the future is bright. The last 15-18 months (real time) have been a period of discovery; now there are alliances forming to exchange maps and information or protect members against some of the marauding tribes. There is even talk of starting a player-published newsletter. Things look good for those who have been in the game for awhile, but there is still much to offer new players.

TERRA II (Clemens and Associates, P.O. Box 4539, San Clemente, CA 92672-0793); \$10.00 set-up (includes rulebook and two turns); \$3.50 per turn. Designed by Jon Clemens; computer-moderated; less-than-a-week turn around time.

FG

Keeping Posted

PBM Update

Clemens and Associates

Terra II

Northern Hemisphere: The dozens of new tribes which recently began moving south through the mountain passes north of Vinchu are making slow progress. There seem to be major mountain ranges to both the east and west. These mountains are very rugged and almost impassable. Even when the mountains are avoided their way is blocked by a large bay of irregular shape. All must make haste if they are to locate Vinchu before the arrival of winter.

The area around Diwal is still in flames. Numerous battles have been fought involving the Ranger, Hekawi, Sunset Heart, Allerion, and Gaillard tribes. It is not known which tribes are the aggressors and which are trying to drive out the raiders to make Diwal a safe place to trade. The marketplace in Diwal was closed for a time, perhaps as a result of the hostilities.

Drake, the Lawful, has led his tribe out onto a precarious peninsula. Many of his advisors are growing disenchanted with his leadership and are threatening to overthrow him and lead the tribe back to the mainland. Meanwhile, allies of theirs are wandering aimlessly in search of Lisan.

Southern Hemisphere: The Tir Tairngire, Utara, and Ewing tribes are all operating in the Trisul area. The strategic importance of this city is obvious to all who explore the area. This port dominates all trade within hundreds of miles, being located where three great bodies of water meet.

A period of calm has existed in the south. The Klee tribe has returned to the silver mines, the Comanche is staying close to Haida, and the other tribes with battle experience seem content to explore toward the north. The Micanopy tribe seems to be leading one such group toward Trisul.

Conquest of Insula II

Grenengol: The campaign has ended, with the Baron of Enderby managing to hold on to a slim lead and win. This elevates Chris Renoud to the rank of Count and allows him to participate in the next game of *Conquest of Insula II* free of charge. Second place went to the Baron of Hapsburg, who had finally defeated the Baron of Crandall in their long series of battles.

Farrakeim: The Baron of Reaper has begun a siege of the village of Wolfs Lair. The initial attack was primarily to reduce the fortifications. He is now expected to launch a full-scale attack. The Baron of Atsivalsi still leads in this campaign as a result of his successful defense of his village.

Andamark: As expected, the Baron of Dasin wasted no time in putting his army in the field. He launched a massive attack on the village of Kizylkum. While he was able to break into the village at one point and kill over 100 villagers, over 80 of his warriors died in the ditch around the village. The Count of Devon also has his army in that area, so the next few weeks may be very bloody.

Jiborkwi: The Baron of Winslow appears to be intent on scoring quickly in this campaign. He has sent a large army into the field with some siege equipment. His neighbors should be wary. The Baron of Siltan has brought his scout mission back to the village for reinforcements. The Baroness of Lorraine has concentrated on the construction of

trebuchets and appears ready to send her army north.

Glizenole: The Baron of Rakshasa has already sent his army toward the village of Mercla. The Baron of Foggia is also in the field and has been conducting a wide sweep around his village. Most of the barons have contented themselves with the production of arms and equipment.

— Jon Clemens

The Roundtable

World of Angrelmar

The annals of Angrelmar are compiled by the good monks of the Temple of Mantor on Eerie in the Book of the Jammak. Here is the entry for 876.

It was after the death of Brother Syrene during the hard winter of 875 that I, Brother Sligh, was chosen to keep this chronicle. If the truth be told, I would have gladly by-passed this honor so that I could continue to work on my invention, but when the faithful are called, the hard-pressed answer.

The barbarians will be damned, so I will not give pen to their activities. As usual there was a lot of hubbub in the Jammak. For some reason those Nirog brothers can't seem to get along, and they decided on trial by combat this year at the Celebration of the



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Trelmakis. When Prince Victor got a nosebleed they called the whole thing off and trouped up to the Empress' quarters. She settled the whole matter by appointing a Council of Princes to advise on the ruling of the Empire. Bless her! The Council includes Savak, Rathal, Auerlus, Vicor, Adrian II, H.Ildric and Bernars. Rathal Glamils was married in the same season to Arbagaill of Garganyun. In the southern part of the Jammak Duke Haidar was made Bishop of Dakar

Late in the spring Prince Vicor had a son -- who is named, can you believe it, Shangri-la. The Jamads have no taste in names, which you will see when I tell you that Lord Evald died and was succeeded by his nephew, Yertzud. Rufarn was named Senior Count Palatine, whatever that is. A shocking thing was that Rathal Glamils accused Bishop Hildric of wrongdoing and ordered him to be judged in Ara in 877. I can't believe anything will come of that. Count Onslor returned home late in the year after spending years as a prisoner in Great Kalatia.

Speaking of Great Kalatia, Val rescued his family from Drangar and everything seems well. Lord Uther hosted the Hingga Harvest Tournament and the Kalatian nobility faithfully attended. In Allandor no one seemed interested in attending the coronation of Morbet Mataran as king. Only one tonogan showed up, which sounds like a dreadful party. Allandor launched war against Varata and more of the lords showed up for that. In Varata, Kuran, spiritual leader and founder of the Jozephines, died. He appointed his disciple, Onan, to succeed him. Now I am released to go back to my drawing board. Faithfully, Brother Sligh.

Schubel & Son

The Tribes of Crane

Crane II. The city of Viken recently came under siege by a Dark Union army under the leadership of



Neptune, the city leader of Hap. Neptune launched the attack as a pre-emptive strike against a possible siege of his city by members of the Longknives alliance. Heavy fighting ensued, with both sides fighting until exhausted and establishing battle lines within the city, the Dark Union forces holding only a small enclave in the northern part of the city. Several weeks later both sides rushed in reinforcements, and these reinforcements clashed in the seas and forests outside the city. The situation appeared grim for the Viken defenders until a large force of hawkmens of the Tatum Alliance entered the fray, driving back the Dark Union legions and bringing in badly-needed supplies. The Dark Union position is now perilous, but the nearby Dark Union citadels at Festul and Zadar have promised extensive reinforcements. The battle's outcome is much in doubt.

— Duane Wilcoxson

JF & L

Kings

The newly formed International Peace Organization is facing its first crisis, as Paranor is about to fall to Latavian troops. King Thunderfist V of Valinor, acting as 1st President of the I.P.O., has sent a letter to Fuer Norm of Latavia asking that he stop the war and allow King Charmane to return to Paranor. It is expected that Fuer Norm will ignore the request of the I.P.O. Will the I.P.O. be forced to send in peace-keeping troops?

The country of Plizac, located on the continent of Ter Von, has been mysteriously destroyed. Investigations by neighboring countries have resulted in failure to determine the cause of this disaster. Reports from the area state that there are no buildings standing, though the roads are still passable. There have been some bodies discovered, but nowhere near the more than 60,000 people that once populated this country.

Olympic athletes from almost every country are training hard in preparation for the 2nd Olympic Games. This will be the first Olympics in which Knights will compete. The Kingdom of Britanica will be hosting the games, and has already completed work on the Olympic Complex. More than 50 countries are expected to enter athletes and/or Knights in the 16 events. Competition for the four prizes is expected to be fierce. The Wizard's Council guarantees the safety of all participants and spectators. Following the games, a royal wedding will take place between the Elven King Celeborn of Lothlorien and the Lady Galadriel of Imladais.

Empire Games

Realms of Sword and Thunder

The summer Festival and Tournament at Hameron found many players miscalculating their movements and arriving late, but a number of interesting diplomatic deals were struck anyway.

Crassus of Asgarden has stood the city on its head by launching a guild war, with the participation of C.E.F. guild berserkers reported. He seems to have established himself as the new force among the thieves' guilds, but many expect the city's rulers to make some response to the violence in the streets.

We are heading into the second winter since the death of King Constantine, with no agreement on a successor to the throne. A number of barons are now very impatient. There will be a strong push to reconvene as quickly as possible once warm weather comes again. It is rumored that the Duke of Cornwall has secretly outfitted a last-ditch mission to Rome in an attempt to find the heir to the House of Pendragon this winter.

Adventures By Mail

Company News: Kevin Cropper's K.J.C. Games of Lancashire, U.K., has announced that an agreement has been signed granting Adventures By Mail of New York the official license to moderate K.J.C. Games' *Crasimoff's World* play-by-mail game in North America. Adventures By Mail will be creating their own rulebook, a new map and Jack Everitt will head the staff of gamemasters.

Crasimoff's World is a human-moderated game set in a medieval-type world populated by several races, with the human race predominant. The player is the leader of a young band of fighters, priests, and mages who, by leaving the safety of their hometown, have taken the step toward gaining the knowledge and experience necessary to become a powerful leader of the land. Armed with swords and aided by magic, they can track down legends, visit distant towns by land or river (possibly conducting trade), and either parley or battle with those they encounter.

Adventures By Mail has set the date of August 1, 1984 as the first day turns will be mailed out. The rules package will be available in July. Adventures By Mail, P.O. Box 436, Cohoes, NY 12047

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Blood On My Typewriter

by Christopher Frink

The last installment of "Blood On My Typewriter" saw me ranting and raving about all the games based on novels, movies, and TV shows that are filling up the game stores. This issue, I'm writing about the ongoing deluge of roleplaying games. The big stories in this issue of *Fantasy Gamer* are reviews of two new role-playing games and a preview of a new edition of a third. While we were slapping this issue together, three more new RPGs landed on our doorstep. All these arrivals got me thinking about the fantasy RPG market and these games in particular: Do these releases add anything to the hobby?

The answer is yes.

And no.

Avalon Hill, the boardgaming giant, has arrived on the RPG scene in a big way. They've chosen a revised version of *RuneQuest*, one of the better games on the market, and two brand-new efforts to spearhead their thrust. By all accounts, *RuneQuest 3* (see David Dunham's preview on page 26) is an improvement on an already solid, simple system. The Gloranthan mythos and setting have been deftly separated from the structure of the game, leaving a set of systems that can be used to play out any kind of fantasy adventure. *RuneQuest 3* stands as a positive addition to the genre. (*Lords of Creation* is another good addition; look for the preview on page 28.)

On the other hand, Avalon Hill has tossed in something that's not so wonderful — *Powers & Perils*. (You can get the details from Matt Costello on page 24.) *P&P* is not a positive addition to the world of RPGs. I can't believe AH thinks this is a game for beginners. If *P&P* is complicated enough to put off hardened gamers, what's it going to do for the complete novices?

And let's not limit the discussion to Avalon Hill. Iron Crown Enterprises' *Middle-Earth Role Playing* is one of the three new games mentioned above. *MERP*, a simmered-down version of I.C.E.'s very complete *Rolemaster* game, is aimed at attracting beginning players and veterans who would like to run low-level characters in the Tolkien fantasy world. *MERP* may be aimed at non-RPGers, but the game is still pretty formidable — 104 pages chock full of forms and charts can be imposing even to a seasoned player. If a game company is going to aim a new release at the non-player crowd, you'd think it would do more to make its product less intimidating.

One of the other new games we received, *Chill*, is less intimidating and much more accessible than any other game I've seen lately. This "horror" RPG (a second cousin to Tri-Tac's *Stalking the Night Fantastic* and

Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*) is the debut release from Pacesetter Ltd., a new game company made up of ex-TSR employees. The game is so straightforward it can be played within an hour of the time you first pick it up. *Chill* isn't the only recent release that has been designed to be learned quickly and easily; TSR's new RPG, *Marvel Super Heroes*, is another (but it's not a fantasy game — look for the review in an upcoming issue of *Space Gamer*).

Assistant Editor Allen Varney has coined a word to describe the way these easy-to-learn systems get players into a game almost immediately: *jackrabbiting*. Players of these games get going quickly without wading through a sea of rules; character generation isn't the endless process it seems to be in many games; and they provide simple adventures designed to teach inexperienced gamemasters and players the rules as painlessly as possible.

Chill is the kind of addition to the RPG shelf at the game store I'd like to see more of. I'm not saying that detailed simulations have no place on that shelf — just that it's already full of complicated games. If this hobby is

going to hook some new players, it's going to need some more attractive bait. There are plenty of potential RP gamers who need an interesting invitation to join in the fun, and it looks like the industry is beginning to provide such invitations.

Games like *Chill* (and TSR's *Marvel Super Heroes*) are a breath of fresh air this increasingly stuffy hobby needs. First, it moves away from unnecessarily complex rules. Second, *Chill*'s setting — the horror genre — hasn't already been overrun with RPGs. I'd like to see more games that break new ground (or even relatively new ground).

How many sword-and-sorcery RPGs are going to be produced before the last one debuts? Do we really need another way to cast a spell or hack an orc? The hobby would be better served by improving the games already on the market or seeking out new areas to game — not by churning out one standard FRPG after another. I guess Avalon Hill is trying to do the latter with *RuneQuest 3* and *Powers & Perils*, while the smaller companies like Pacesetter Ltd. explore new territory and make things more interesting.

FS

ATTENTION

This is the last issue of *Fantasy Gamer*.

We gave it our best shot (and if reader response is any indication, you thought it was a pretty good shot at that). Circulation was good. Ad revenue was good. We could hardly keep up with all the contributions we were receiving. So what went wrong?

What went wrong is that we had too much of a good thing. We were trying to publish 24 quality magazines a year and we keep introducing new games. Something had to give.

We had to make some tough decisions. Could we get away with cutting back our game production? Of course not. Could we cut back the magazine schedule? Well . . . yes, we could. And we have.

We're recombining *Space Gamer* and *Fantasy Gamer* beginning with *Space Gamer* 71. As in days of old (was it really just a year ago we split *SG* and *FG*?) *Space Gamer* will cover the entire spectrum of adventure gaming. Six times a year, we'll bring you authoritative reviews, strategy hints, designers' notes, interviews, and the full-color adventures of Finious Fingers.

Fantasy Gamer subscribers will have their subscriptions transferred automatically. Non-subscribers, we hope you'll look for the new, improved *Space Gamer* at your local game shop. We'll show you just how bright the future can be.

Space Gamer 71 features a special section detailing developments in the world of Tekumel. Our special *Swords & Glory* section includes an introduction to the Empire of the Petal Throne, an interview with its creator M.A.R. Barker, and reviews of nearly every piece of EPT-related material on the market today! You'll also find articles like "Converting *Fantasy Trip* Characters to *Tunnels & Trolls*," and a review of the fantasy PBM game, *Angrelmar, the Court of Kings*.

Fantasy Gamer lives . . . in the pages of *Space Gamer*.

THE VILLAGE IDIOT

SF/Fantasy Hall of Fame to Open

Plans have been announced for the opening of a National Hall of Fame of Science Fiction and Fantasy in Beaumont, Texas. Planners envision an entire sf/fantasy community springing up around the hall as construction begins in early 1985.

The organizers say the hall will house the largest and first permanent collection of fantastic art and will sponsor the national academy of fantastic art. They hope not only to provide a yardstick for quality in the fantastic art field, but to preserve all sorts of memorabilia, including sets and props from celebrated motion pictures and television programs.

Other goals of the hall include restoration and preservation of science fiction and fantasy films; cataloging and preservation of books through microfilm; and honoring fantasy gaming with annual awards.

Hap Henriksen is the President of the Board of Trustees of the hall, and noted fantasy artist Real Musgrave is Chairman of the Board. Other renowned board members include Michael Whelan, Stephen Donaldson, and Alan Dean Foster. Beaumont is approximately 100 miles east of Houston on Interstate 10, a major east-west highway that stretches from Los

Angeles to Florida. The project has the full support of the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce, as well as the rest of the town's civic and business leaders.

The hall is supposed to act as a centerpiece for a renaissance of Beaumont's downtown

area. The land and buildings surrounding the proposed museum site will be developed into science fiction/fantasy-related businesses, shops, restaurants, and art galleries. This is the first time a city has tried to create an sf/fantasy community and tourist center.

Nova Adds Magic to Lost Worlds

Nova Game Designs, Inc., has released the ninth character in its *Lost Worlds* series, the "Fighter Mage with Magic Sword." This is the first release in the popular swordplay game to incorporate magic.

The magic system, developed by Dennis Greci, uses spell cards. Each "Fighter Mage" book comes with five spell cards out of a possible 15 — each "Fighter Mage" book contains a different spell assortment. Each book also contains one of many different magic swords, each with different capabilities. The mage player selects three of the five spells before a fight begins, and places them face down on the table, and then selects one of the three as the "ready" spell. The ready spell

can be changed before any turn, but when a spell is successfully cast in a turn, the ready spell is then turned over and the effects read. In addition to strength points, the mage also gets magic points that determine how many spells he can throw. In a campaign-type game, the number of magic points a character has can be increased just as the strength points are.

Spells available to the "Fighter Mage" include Hypnotize, Levitate, Sleep, Fumble, Panic, Fireball, and Vampire Fly.

Other recent and forthcoming releases in Nova's *Lost Worlds* series include "Cold Drake," a flying dragon; "Halfling with Sword and Shield"; and "Lizard Man with Scimitar and Buckler Shield."

News Briefs

Gameplay Suspends Publication

Gameplay magazine has suspended publication, and its future is very much up in the air.

"It wasn't meeting the objectives we set for it," said Peter Bromley, one of the owners of Crystal Publications, *Gameplay*'s parent company. Crystal envisioned *Gameplay* as a "newsstand-distributed general interest gaming magazine," Bromley said, and with a circulation of under 5,000, the magazine was not meeting those objectives, either financially or editorially.

Editor Jake Jaquet said the decision to suspend publication was made by "a majority of the stockholders — Darwin Bromley (the president of Mayfair Games) and his brothers, Peter, David, and William." The decision came in mid-April. While Crystal Publications

will continue with some other projects — most notably a 1985 fantasy calendar featuring the art of Tim Hildebrandt — Jaquet and two other *Gameplay* staff members will no longer work for Crystal. "We'll all look for gainful employment elsewhere," Jaquet said.

Jaquet was understandably angry with the decision. "I could see myself getting fired or something like that, but not shutting down the whole magazine . . . it has too much potential," he said. "I'm sorry that this has happened, and I'm mildly upset that this decision was made . . . I'd like to try this again sometime."

Contributors to *Gameplay* will be paid, Jaquet said, and all submitted manuscripts will be returned. Bromley said that while no decision has been made about what to do about the paid subscribers, "we'll try to extend some effort to satisfy" them.

Blade, Arneson to Team Up

Dave Arneson, co-designer of *Dungeons and Dragons* and newly-elected member of the Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame, is rewriting his famous *Blackmoor* supplement for publication by Blade, a division of Flying Buffalo.

Blade plans to release *Blackmoor* as a member of its generic *Catalyst* series that so far includes *Citybook I* and *II* and *Grimtooth's Traps and Traps, Too*. The supplement is "based on the original Temple of the Frog," Rick Loomis of Blade said.

Blackmoor is likely not to be the last team-up between Loomis' Flying Buffalo and Arneson's Adventure Games, as the two companies are currently negotiating a distribution and marketing agreement which will bring the companies much closer together. Loomis said many of the details were not ironed out yet, but that he and Arneson had been friends for a long time, and "Why should we be doing things separately when we could be doing things together?"

Convention Calendar

*Lake Geneva, WI — GENCON XVII, Aug. 16 - 19 TSR sponsors this mammoth convention, held on the campus of the University of Wisconsin — Parkside, midway between Lake Geneva, Racine, and Kenosha, WI. For more information, contact GENCON XVII, TSR Inc., Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Melbourne, Australia — ARCANACON II, Aug. 23 - 26. Gaming con down under, featuring lots of role playing. Contact Arcanacon, 105 Cardigan Street, Carlton 3053, Australia.

Annapolis, MD — PHOENIXCON '84, Aug. 24 - 26 Not held in Phoenix, this Maryland con features Judson Scott and other film and TV stars. Contact Phoenixcon, Box 599, Arnold, MD 21012.

*Los Angeles, CA — WORLDCON, August 30 - September 3. The World Science Fiction Convention. Guest of Honor is Gordon R. Dickson. Contact L.A. Con II, Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

San Mateo, CA — PACIFICON, Sept. 1 - 3. Gaming con in the San Francisco area. Contact Pacificon, Box 5548, San Jose, CA 95150.

*Cleveland, OH — EARTHCON IV, Sept. 7 - 9. SF and gaming con. Steve Jackson is Gaming Guest of Honor. Contact Earthcon IV, 1553 Second Street # 1, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221.

Dallas, TX — PROTOCON, Sept. 21 - 23. Star Trek con featuring Walter Koenig. Contact Protocon, 6018 Parkdale, Dallas, TX 75227.

Naperville, IL — SPYCON 2, Sept. 21 - 23. The 20 Years Later Affair, a convention devoted to secret agents, spies and special agents. Contact SpyCon 2, c/o Susan Cole, 2710 Rohlwing Road, Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008.

Cleveland, OH — NOWSCON '84, Sept. 29 - 30. Napoleonics, Micro Armor, other miniatures, boardgaming, and auction. Contact Northern Ohio Wargaming Society, Box 29116, Parma, OH 44129

Schenectady, NY — TENTH ANNUAL COUNCIL OF 5 NATIONS, October 5 - 8. Gaming con. Contact I.M. Lord, SWA 10th Council, 1639 Eastern Parkway, Schenectady, NY 12309.

Mile End, Australia — SAGACON, Oct. 6. Gaming convention way down under, on the campus of Adelaide University. Contact SaGaCon, c/o Homer Zeotz, 2 Cowra St., Mile End S.A. 5031, Australia

Denver, CO — CRUSADER CON IV, Oct. 19 - 21. Game tournaments, computer room, more, on the campus of Metropolitan State College. Contact The Auraria Gamer's Club, Box 13395, Denver, CO 80201-3395

Columbus, OH — COGACON '84, Oct. 20 - 21. Gaming con on the Ohio State Campus. Contact Paul T. Riegel, c/o War Game Designs, 6119 East Main St. #202, Columbus, OH 43213.

Seattle, WA — RUSTYCON II, Jan. 18 - 20, 1985. SF con with some gaming. Contact Rustycon, Box 47132, Seattle, WA 98146.

SJ Games will attend those cons marked with an asterisk.



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Capsule Reviews



Cutter the elf and friend, from *Elfquest*.

Fantasy Gamer reviews fantasy boardgames, roleplaying games, computer games, and game supplements. We will review any fantasy game if the publisher sends us a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games. The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which *Fantasy Gamer* and *Space Gamer* are seeking reviews include *Battlebikes*, *Compleat Alchemist*, *Compleat Adventurer*, *Compleat Spell-caster*, *Conan* miniatures Set #1, *Conan Unchained*, *Crypt of Medea*, *Death House*, *Dragons of Flame*, *Mission to Alcazar*, *Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure*, *Northern Mirkwood*, *Northwest Frontier*, *Operation Guardian*, *Plague of Terror*, *Quagmire!*, *Ravensgate*, *Shade of the Sinking Plain*, *Shadowland*, *Space Race*, *Streets of Gems*, *Star Fleet Battle Manual*, *Star Frontiers Federation Ships* miniatures, *Starship Captain*, *Tarantis*, *Village of Peddler's Ferry*, *When a Star Falls*, and *Wizards' Realm*.

Games

MIDDLE PASSAGE (Ragnarok Enterprises); \$4.95. Designed by David F. Nalle. One 5½" x 8½" 12-page rulebook, player and ship record sheet, two cardstock 8½" x 11" mapsheets, six sets of 16 cardstock ship markers, and a ziplock bag. For 2-6 players; playing time one to four hours. Published 1983.

Middle Passage is a game of trade and raid in the Atlantic set during the late 1600s to early 1800s. Players assume the roles of naval commanders, merchants, or pirates out to "get rich" from plunder, ambush, or legal commerce. The possibilities for activity are limited only by a few rules, and for the most part the game is very open-ended. Players can purchase goods from ports, move across the bodies of water separating them from good markets, conduct ship-to-ship combat (complete with rules for boarding and capture), and sell trade goods. Ships are built to the players' specifications, though the prices are so high that no one can get the upper hand easily without sacrificing elsewhere. To win, a player needs to accumulate \$600,000 in equipment, cash, and/or trade goods. To accomplish this requires great tact, not to mention just a little bit of salesmanship.

Middle Passage is easy to play, but is very deep in strategies. It can survive repeated playing sessions without getting old hat. Scenarios are very balanced, perhaps even to the extreme, but a mistake can be fatal. Combats are quick and fun, resembling a "slick" version of *Wooden Ships and Iron Men*, without the maneuvering headaches.

Perhaps the worst thing about *Middle Passage* is its graphic design. The maps work, but I would like to have seen some color; the counters also serve the purpose, but they are flimsy in comparison to other game companies' components. Another irritating thing about *Middle Passage* is what is not in it. Captains can gain experience and become more

effective in game terms, but nowhere in the rules is there anything to describe crew experience. I also think that some sort of maintenance should be paid by the player to cover basic upkeep of his ships — only combat repairs are mentioned and those in passing. A little more attention towards detail could have meant a better game with no loss of enjoyment or added complexity.

Middle Passage, despite floundering in a few places, will not collect dust on my game shelf. It is a great little game that can be played and expanded with little effort. For those of you who are looking for a highly competitive and fast-action game, your ship has come in.

—Jerry Epperson

ELFQUEST (Chaosium); \$20. Designed by Steve Perrin. One 72-page "Elfbook," one 36-page "Worldbook," various play aids. Boxed. For an indefinite number of players; playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Imagine a cross between Conan the Barbarian and the Smurfs and you've got an idea of what *Elfquest* is all about. With modest beginnings as an independently produced comic book by Wendy and Richard Pini, *Elfquest* has become a genuine phenomenon encompassing books, magazines, t-shirts, and even a rumored motion picture. Now Chaosium (makers of the popular *Call of Cthulhu* and *RuneQuest*) have taken things a step further with the release of the *Elfquest* roleplaying game, allowing players to recreate for themselves the adventures of these charming (but feisty) elves in the World of Two Moons.

The components are first-class, including two rulebooks, reference and character sheets, a four-page "Example of Play," a map of the World of Two Moons, and five dice. The rulebooks are thorough and clearly written and are liberally illustrated with excerpts from the original comic books drawn by Wendy Pini. Care is taken to explain roleplaying concepts for the benefit of new players, and there are plenty of examples of play given to clarify the rules. Based on Chaosium's standard roleplaying system, the game plays smoothly and at the same time is accommodating to a surprising variety of situations. The familiar characters of Cutter, Redlance, and Skywise are brought to life quite effectively with the system, they're true to the source and are fun to play.

Although a dream come true for *Elfquest* fans, this is not a game for beginning roleplayers. There are over 100 pages of rules to digest, including 19 pages of relatively complex combat rules (which is strange, considering designer Steve Perrin states that combat is generally "contrary to the spirit of the story" and should therefore be de-emphasized). There isn't much in the way of magic, and the variety of creatures and encounters is also fairly limited. This is true to the setting of *Elfquest*, but roleplayers used to the scope of systems like *Dungeons & Dragons* or *Traveller* may find this world too restrictive. Those unfamiliar with the original saga may be at a loss as to what to do next, three scenarios are provided, but they're actually little more than single situations used to illustrate the rules rather than full-fledged adventures.

Familiarity with the original *Elfquest* is just about a prerequisite for complete enjoyment of the game. Check out the books first (and since they're a delight, you won't be sorry). For those who are already fans of *Elfquest*, waste no time in investing in a copy of the game.

—Rick Swan

VICTORIAN ADVENTURE (S.K.S. Distributors, 79 Hainton Ave., Grimsby, S. Humberside, England); 3.50 pounds. Designed by Stephen Smith. One 8½" x 12" 50-page book. Published 1983.

Fans of Sherlock Holmes' adventures, H.G. Wells' scientific romances, and other Victorian-era literature who have been looking for a game system that will help them roleplay in their favorite historical period can look to England and Stephen Smith's *Victorian Adventure*. Billed as "the first 'Truly British' RPG," *Victorian Adventure* includes rules on creating various Victorian adventurers (with details on determining social class, family background, marital status, and other conventions important to the Victorians); combat with period firearms (Lee-Enfield rifles, Webley revolvers, Gatling and Gardner machine guns, and oddities such as the Dreyse Needle gun); spiritualism and conducting seances, Victorian monsters (mummies, vampires, werewolves, zombies, and serpent people), and running a Victorian Britain-based campaign. The game covers the entire period of Queen Victoria's reign, from 1837 to 1901, and includes background information in the form of a Diary of Events; dates of important inventions; tables of average wages of lower, middle, and upper classes; and price lists of common items. The wage and price tables list values for both 1837 and 1901, the opening and closing years of the period. A map of the British Empire in 1890, three scenarios, and guidelines for creating O.P.'s (Other People, the game's term for specialized NPCs such as American Gunslingers, Chinese Boxers, Acrobats, and Sleuths) round out the package.

As an aficionado of Victorian times, I found *Victorian Adventure* quite intriguing. It is fast and easy to play; characters are created simply and quickly with several 2d10 rolls for attributes, and the number of skill levels is easily determined by averaging a character's Mental Strength and Education. A great deal of background flavor can be derived from the game, and the systems mesh well enough with the generic stats of my "A Gamers Guide to Victorian London" (FG #2) to almost have been designed to complement that article (though VA was developed quite independently, prior to FG #2's publication).

The only flaw I can find in *Victorian Adventure*, other than some rough spots in editing, is that there is no map of London in Victorian days for use by players unfamiliar with the city. But then, since

the game was designed primarily for British gamers, who would have a greater knowledge of such background info than we "colonials," this is hardly a criticism. I personally don't care for the addition of spiritualism, but its inclusion is certainly valid, as it gained its greatest popularity in Victorian times.

If the Victorian era holds any interest for you in terms of roleplaying, and you don't mind having to convert your dollars to British pounds and sending to England to obtain a copy, I think you'll find much of interest in *Victorian Adventure*.

—William A. Barton

Supplements

ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS MONSTER MANUAL II (TSR). \$12. Written by Gary Gygax. Supplement to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. 9" x 11" 160-page hardbound book. Published 1983.

Here they are, over 300 "official" monsters for *AD&D*. The format of *Monster Manual II* is the same as *Monster Manual I* and the *Fiend Folio*, entries are arranged alphabetically, with some grouped under a common heading (e.g., Dinosaurs). Almost all entries have illustrations. Included are all the statistics needed for *AD&D* play: frequency, armor class, etc. Paragraphs dealing with habits, special attack modes, and the like follow, with the more intricate creations getting more coverage. In the back of the book are several tables, including Monster Random Encounter tables (for dungeon, outdoor, and aquatic encounters), Dungeon Monsters by Level and Frequency at that Level, Monster by Terrain and Frequency on that Terrain, and an Index which includes 900+ monsters from the *Monster Manual I* and *II*, and the *Fiend Folio*. There is even a small section on making your own random encounter tables.

The cover painting by Jeff Basley is beautiful, depicting an armored giant or ogre attacking a lone adventurer. Inside is an extremely varied and useful array of monsters. There are demons and devils, dragons, a handful of new races, common animals, worms, slimes, and even the 15 bizarre varieties of Modrons (the inhabitants of the plane of Nirvana). There are creations for every situation, and challenges for every level of player character. The tables are handy and complete; TSR should be congratulated.

A problem could be that the average monster is tough, with some so deadly only very powerful and well-equipped player-character groups could handle them. There's also an emphasis on monsters from the different planes. If you don't use TSR's version of the multiverse, you might not get full use out of this *Manual*. The new races could use a little fleshing out, since only combat-related material is included. A caveat. A few creatures are not brand-new, they've appeared in *Dragon* magazine or in *AD&D* modules.

If you're an *AD&D* buff, you must have this book. It is useful and exciting, and includes many official monsters never seen before. If your players are getting blasé because they've memorized the first *Manual* and the *Fiend Folio*, spring a few darlings from the *Monster Manual II* on 'em. When you see their faces, you'll know what a good investment you made.

—Mark Pokrzywnicki

DUNGEONLAND — Module EX1 (TSR); \$5.50. Designed by E. Gary Gygax. One 8½" x 11" 32-page rulebook, 11" x 17" map and folder. Adventure for *AD&D* characters, levels 9-12. For several players, playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Dungeonland is a high-level adventure designed to be an extension (thereby gaining the EX heading) to another adventure. As such, it is meant to be sprung on unsuspecting players as a whimsical diversion from the ordinary game session. Based on one of the classics of literature, it brings to life a dangerous version of the original. This module is as deadly as it is hilarious. Referees must be well versed in both the game and its source to bring out the best in *Dungeonland*.

The high points of this module are its humor and its execution. The players must constantly be on their toes, especially those who have read the source. The informed ones tend to expect the harmless antecedents. The module itself looks and feels different from the normal TSR product.

Unfortunately, there are several minor typos, the most noticeable being the exclusion of two location letters on the map of the woods. (These are A and F; they are situated on the embankment.) The major quibble I have with the module is that one of the monsters is not detailed fully — Gygax directs you to another TSR module for details. Although the monster has since been reprinted in the *Monster Manual II*, I found it annoying. It smacked too much of commercial motives, rather than an omission due to space considerations.

Overall, *Dungeonland* is an extremely good module. It was a very welcome addition to my world, and it can easily be added into any campaign. Keep the players in the dark about its purchase, and read the source. It's worth it.

—Robert E. James

THE LAND BEYOND THE MAGIC MIRROR — EX2 (TSR); Adventure module for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. One 32-page 8½" x 11" book with 11" x 17" folder with maps inside. For several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror is one of two related *AD&D* modules which are based, very loosely, on [author deleted]'s classic tales of [reference deleted]. Specifically, it features some creatures and events which echo elements in [work deleted].

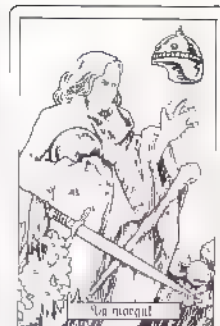
This adventure is interesting as a change of pace, especially the parts which are simply strange instead of deadly. Unfortunately, these are in the minority, as almost every character in here seems, if not malicious toward the adventurers, at least quite willing to attack them at the slightest cause (of course, this is often the way adventurers act, and turnabout is fair play).

Unfortunately, most of this adventure is wandering around and battling various creatures of the worst variety, especially as Gygax has seen fit to arbitrarily give every creature in this dimension a 25% Magic Resistance. It's never clear exactly why these creatures are here; for example, at one point, the characters are rewarded for besting a group of monsters by having an invisible servant give them one or more magic items. There is no explanation of why this is done. And the final scene of the entire adventure seems to me entirely too slanted against the adventurers, even at the levels recommended for this adventure (9-12).

In conclusion, I find it hard to recommend this module except to people who simply adore [author deleted] and would like to see an adventure based on his works. I personally think that a good change-of-pace adventure could be created using the [reference deleted] books as a source, but I'd be inclined to make it of a lower level. Most experienced DMs could create a better adventure on this subject, which I've been prohibited from mentioning.

—Russell Grant Collins

(Editor's note: Come on, Russell, we can't let our reviewers give everything away! Boy, what a spoilsport.)



Two cards from Ardor's Ardan deck, reduced.

ARDOR (I.C.E.); \$10. Designed by Terry K. Amthor. 52-page 8½" x 11" book, with 16" x 20" full-color fold-out map of Ardor. For several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Ardor is one of a continuing series of excellent campaign modules released by I.C.E. for use with any system, although the emphasis is on their own *Rolemaster* system. It is the first of the modules to go beyond the "known" area of Middle-earth. The book details a large area situated in the south of their previously published map of Middle-earth (for those who have not purchased this beautiful product, a smaller version is printed on the back). The area's major power is the Court of Ardor, an organization dedicated to the destruction of the Sun and Moon. They are opposed by several individuals and (one hopes) the players. The book describes the members of the Court, their strongholds and the lands where they hold sway. Their opponents are also detailed, as is a comprehensive history of Ardor.

This installment in the series is quite different from the others published. The others lay out

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Tolkien's world faithfully, fleshing out the framework described in the books but never departing from them. *Ardor*, since it is set outside the West, can explore new territory. It is also the only module to have an actual storyline: the Court must be defeated within a certain span of time, or the world will suffer for it. I applaud I.C.E. for taking this step, as I have always wondered what was happening in the rest of Middle-earth.

This supplement isn't for those who have been running a Tolkien campaign using the other modules. The distances involved almost preclude any existing character's involvement — *Ardor* requires a campaign of its own. Indeed, the best way to use this module is to create characters with a vested interest in defeating the Court. *Ardor* sets up a master plan that is outstanding, but the details during the two years allowed for player involvement must be created by the GM.

Ardor is not for inexperienced gamers, nor is it for hack-and-slash enthusiasts. It is for those who love a coherent world, a plot that won't quit, and a long-term campaign. *Ardor* is a great addition to I.C.E.'s version of Middle-earth, and I look for the next serving anxiously.

—Robert E. James

ENCYCLOPEDIA HARNICA Volumes 1 and 2 (Columbia Games); \$6 each. By N. Robin Crossby, Ron Gibson, and Brian Clemens. Supplements for *Harn* (which is, itself, a supplement useable with any FRP system). Each volume is a 20-page 8½" x 11" booklet. Playing time indefinite. Published 1984.

Columbia Games' *Harn* introduced a new world for fantasy roleplaying adventures. Now we have the first parts of an ongoing *Encyclopedia Harnica*, supplying more data about the world of *Harn*. Each of these volumes contains three encyclopedia-style

articles. Vol. 1 covers the Khuzdul (Harnic dwarves), their city of Azadmere, and the Kingdom of Azadmere (an "atlas" entry). Vol. 2 discusses Anisha (an area of ruins), Harnic law, and the "Tashal region in the Kingdom of Kaldor." Many more volumes are promised; presumably the series will continue as long as demand holds up. Each centerspread consists of a pair of attractive full-color maps. These supplements are intended to be cut apart, punched, and inserted in a binder with later additions. The text is quite detailed, and, where appropriate, includes building maps, brief descriptions of individuals, and discussions of economics.

As these books share the virtues of the original *Harn*, they also share some of its faults. A great deal of space is devoted to ancient Harnic history, which will be of limited value to many campaigns. The proofreading seems to be much better than in the first *Harn* release, but the text is still in hard-to-read word-processor type printed on brown paper. And the price — \$6 for 20 pages, or \$5 if you order a subscription to the Encyclopedia series — is awfully high for what you get.

If you liked the original *Harn*, you will probably want these supplements. Otherwise, otherwise.

—Steve Jackson

CITYBOOK II (Blade, Flying Buffalo), \$9.95. Edited by Liz Danforth and Mike Stackpole. Generic fantasy roleplaying supplement. 116-page 8½" x 11" softcover. Published 1984.

Citybook II is Blade's follow-up to the extremely successful (and award-winning) *Citybook I*. The difference is one of specialization — while the first book dealt with a fantasy city in general, with a wide range of shops and locations, *Citybook II* (subtitled *Port O'Call*) deals almost exclusively with sea-related scenarios — ships, smugglers, and even the occasional

sea monster. The book is easily combined with *Citybook I* — just consider the entries here to be located in the "waterfront section" of the same city described in the first book.

Lots of "generic" supplements are obviously written for one particular roleplaying system, with either conversion advice for other systems or simply loosely written rules to make up for the deficiency. Not so with Blade's "Catalyst Series," of which *Citybook II* is but one release. Non-player characters, magical items, even locks are rated on a simple six-level scale; enough details are given in the introductory section that these simple ratings are enough. The difference in magic systems in various fantasy RPGs is taken care of particularly well; spells are classified in eight types, and magic-users are rated in each of the eight categories.

The assorted taverns, shops, fish markets, temples, boats and other port oddities in *Citybook II* contain enough interesting characters, secrets, and treasure to keep any group of fantasy adventurers entertained between quests (and some of the suggested scenarios can easily develop into major quests of their own!). There are only occasional clunkers — for example, it seems every commercial establishment has the scenario suggestion that jealous business rivals try to put the shop (or tavern, or market) out of business. The players can be hired by the rivals to put the heat on the named business, or they can be hired by the business itself to protect against the squeeze. It begins to get a little predictable.

The folks at Blade did a fine job packing the material they did into *Citybook II*'s 116 pages, but it was apparently quite a task. Liz Danforth and Mike Stackpole had to get out the giant-size editing knife to pare down some of the entries to make them fit into the book, and that may have led to some of the book's problems. For example, the sail shop, "Sails of the Everpresent Journeywind," has a couple of problems. The description of shop owner Makea Essani includes a nasty curse and the story of how she came to get it. But the details are extremely jumbled, jumbled to the point that I couldn't tell what was going on or how to break the curse. And the section on Essani's undead former crew is pure gibberish.

There are some really nice pieces in *Citybook II* as well, of course, and they greatly outnumber the weak ones. Without giving away too many of the surprises, some of the scenarios include a courtesan who takes care of the occasionally psychotic and violent customer by turning the lout into a potted plant; a wizard's tower with still-active magical guards 300 years after they were set; and a fish market with a beautiful waitress and an old, feeble porter — neither of whom are what they appear to be.

Citybook II is also a beautiful presentation, equal to the first in the series. The maps are excellent, and the use of similar map symbols throughout makes the maps easy to read, even the most complicated ones. And the interior illustrations are excellent, especially the portraits of the assorted characters by Liz Danforth. Not to leave any artist uncomplimented, Steven S. Crompton and Dave Helber's interior work and the cover by Carl Lundgren are also quite good.

Blade has got a winner with its "Catalyst Series," and *Citybook II* is an excellent addition to the line. If you're a gamemaster who's never let his players get near the open sea because you didn't know how to handle the action, here's a simple introduction that's both easy to run and lots of fun.

—Scott D. Haring

THE FUNGI FROM YUGGOTH (Chaosium), \$10. Designed by Keith Herber. One 8½" x 11" 76-page book. For Keeper and several investigators; playing time variable. Published 1984.

An ancient Brotherhood of evil plots to overthrow civilization with the help of the Great Old Ones in Chaosium's newest scenario pack for *Call of Cthulhu*, *The Fungi from Yuggoth* (subtitled "Desperate Adventures against the Brotherhood").

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Fungi is a connected campaign consisting of eight related scenarios, plus two optional scenarios that may be fitted in if the Keeper desires (or the investigators need the help supplied therein). The campaign concerns the efforts of the investigators to foil the schemes of the Brotherhood of the Beast to unleash horror on the unsuspecting world — in the form of destructive dholes unleashed in the major cities of the planet, the zombie-like terrorists of the Sons of Terror, and Nyarlathotep himself in his form of the Beast. The result, of course, should the investigators fail, is death, destruction, and all that other good stuff, with the Earth ruled by the chosen ones of the Old Ones. The adventure begins innocently enough with the disappearance of a noted New York spiritualist, Paul LeMond, renowned for his psychic dreams and his ability to contact spirits. The trail leads, clue by clue, to New England and a "Thing" in a well, a haunted castle in Transylvania, the ancient tomb of the mad priest Nophru-Ka, the Mi-Go-infested Andes Mountains in Peru, a cult ceremony in San Francisco, and back to Egypt's Necropolis of Giza on the fateful "Day of the Beast." The investigators may even find their way to the Great Library of Celaeno in the Pleiades, six trillion miles away! All the while they will find themselves at odds with numerous worthy adversaries, from a centuries-old Romanian Baron to a millenia-old Chinaman (named, ironically, Fu) to a power-hungry industrialist and his mad scientist underling — with plenty of Cthulhoid creatures thrown in for good measure.

The *Fungi from Yuggoth* has several things to commend it to CoC aficionados. First, it is an excellent adventure, with just the right number of clues spread throughout to hook players into one scenario after another. Except in one place where the trail dead-ends (but can be picked up again, if necessary, through the services of Paul LeMond),

each adventure provides a clue to the next scenario. As a whole, *Fungi* holds together much better even than *Shadows of Yog-Sothoth*, Chaosium's earlier CoC campaign book — undoubtedly because it has a single author rather than several. Most of the scenarios in *Fungi* are not quite so high-powered in the opposition as some of those in *Shadows*, making it a bit more suitable for less-experienced players (though there is one mind-blasting scenario in which two Old Ones may be encountered if the investigators are unlucky). Several new spells and creatures are included to surprise those players who have the rulebook memorized by now, and useful player-aids are provided as well.

About the only real fault I can find with *Fungi from Yuggoth*, other than a few typos and faint echoes of the *Omen* trilogy in the plot, is the title, which is even more misleading than *Shadows of Yog-Sothoth* was. Just as Yog-Sothoth made no appearance in that one, though several of the enemy were known as "Sons of Y-S," the *Fungi* appear only in one scenario and have little else to do with the overall plot. The note "Schemes of the Mi-Go" on the back should have read "Schemes of the Brotherhood of the Beast" to be accurate. (Ah well, I guess the *Fungi* title sells better.)

In spite of the misnaming, *The Fungi from Yuggoth* is probably the best CoC adventure yet released of several excellent offerings.

—William A. Barton

HORROR ON THE HILL (TSR): \$6. Designed by Douglas Niles. Basic game module for *Dungeons & Dragons*. One 32-page book, one 33" x 10" foldout map. For several players; playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

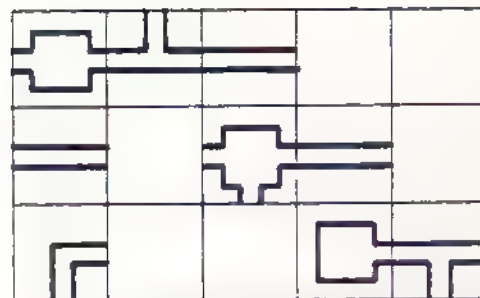
If the rumors flying about the Lion's Den Inn are correct, the mysterious mountain known only as "The Hill" is no place for the faint of heart. Accessible only by crossing the mile-wide River Shriell, "The Hill" has become a refuge for haunted beings and evil creatures. Finding out exactly how this came to be is the puzzle presented in *Horror On the Hill*, a basic adventure module for *Dungeons & Dragons* intended for low-level characters.

Like most recent D&D modules, *Horror On the Hill* is clearly written and easy to follow. Designer Douglas Niles has kept things moving along by including a wide variety of locales, ranging from tangled forests and gloomy caverns to a smoky river inn and a quiet country cottage. Also of interest are two grandmotherly sisters, Rosabella and Rosalinda, who play a pivotal role in the adventure. Unlike the usual one-dimensional NPCs, Rosabella and Rosalinda are given complete personalities and several secrets of their own, making them a lot of fun to play.

Unfortunately, much of *Horror On the Hill* will seem overly familiar to experienced roleplayers. The "horror" is an abandoned monastery complete with the usual assortment of creatures and a fairly pedestrian three-level dungeon. There are ghosts in the graveyard, centipedes in the caverns, and coins in the treasure chest; no surprises here. The three new monsters are dull and besides the thrill of exploration, there's no real motivation for the player-characters to press on. Finally, the two-panel map of the surface of "The Hill" is a confusing tangle of cliffs and trails and as such is pretty useless. The DM would do just as well presenting the hill encounters in numerical order until the players reach the monastery.

To be fair, the module is intended for character levels 1-3 and as an introductory adventure works very well. There is plenty of treasure to be found, a lot of encounters with basic D&D creatures (including a dragon), and problems that are challenging but still manageable for inexperienced players. Others, however, may get the feeling they've been down this road before. With no real surprises, *Horror On the Hill* is best left to the newcomers.

Rick Swan



A portion of the map from *Maze of the Riddling Minotaur*

MAZE OF THE RIDDLING MINOTAUR (TSR), \$7.98. Designed by Jeff Grubb. One 8½" x 11" rulebook; four maps and tri-fold cardstock folder; one maze map done partially in black ink and partially in invisible ink; invisible ink pen. For use with *Expert D&D* rules. Published 1983.

A Grecian princess has been kidnapped by the evil priests of Kiranjo, an ancient cult worshipping a bull-headed deity. The cult was believed destroyed hundreds of years ago, but has recently regained power. As revenge upon King Trueon, a descendant of their ancient enemies, they have kidnapped his daughter and have hidden her in a maze under the ruins of the temple to their god. You are a brave adventurer hired to search the maze and bring her back. The reward is a fully-equipped ship.

As a solo adventure, this module is quite entertaining. TSR has come up with a diceless combat system that works quite well. They have also changed the tip of the invisible ink pen to a wedge shape and have cut down the size of the invisible ink encounter boxes — a great improvement over their first release of this type. Each character carries a magical silver owl that automatically returns to Cathos City with information of his accomplishments before his death. This means that although you can only take one character through the maze at a time in solo play, you may create new characters if needed that will be able to learn from a previous character's mistakes.

In group play, this module is boring unless the GM does extensive fleshing-out work beforehand. There are a few wandering monsters but that doesn't compensate for the lack of set dressing. There are only two or three encounter areas that contain more than one item of interest. TSR states that the module is for character levels 1 through 10, but I feel that 1st-level players will get creamed and 10th-levelers will sleep through the whole thing if it is played as it is written. Also, while the ink pen lasted just barely long enough for me to finish the solo adventure, I was forced to buy another one for group play in order to develop the encounter areas that I'd never visited. After I followed TSR's instructions to prolong the life of the pen, it still didn't work. And although there are riddles to be answered (as the name promises), the threat of attack by the large obsidian minotaurs who ask them is weightless, as the riddles are easily solved.

The module is worth its price if you intend to use it as a solo dungeon or to run a maze but don't want to work out the basic groundwork. It does present some nice building material as well as a couple of interesting new monsters. It is not, however, recommended for those GMs who wish to do nothing more to a module than read it over before running it for their party.

—Kelly Grimes

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RULEBOOK only \$2.50

You might be wondering why anybody would want to bother reviewing dice. On the other hand, where would we be without them? Many wargames and almost all RPGs call for those funny-shaped dice that we love to collect in their many colors and shapes. And since it is impossible to distinguish quality visually, we tend just to look for the exact color we want and ignore brand distinctions. It is worth pointing out, however, that only Gamescience of all U.S. dice manufacturers guarantees its dice to last at least two years without visible wear. Gamescience dice can be identified by the tiny "G" next to the number one on the die, if you look closely.

The most widely-played roleplaying game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, requires the use of 20-sided dice (d20) for combat and magic, so there is much demand for them. Until recently, almost all d20s were icosahedra numbered 1-20 (read as 1-10) twice. The advantage then was that you could read the same die as a d10 for damage rolls or as a d20 for combat resolution — but it required marking the die in two colors so you could positively identify which half was the low side (1-10) and which was the high (11-20). The problem with this is that there is no widely agreed-upon convention for which color is which, so there is always a potential for mistakes, or even cheating, by changing which color is "high" after rolling the die.

To meet this need, several manufacturers started selling icosahedra numbered 1-20, and issued ten-sided irregular polyhedra for use as d10s. These sell very nicely, and double the profit by forcing the gamer to buy two dice when only one is required. Gamescience decided it would offer an alternative, and in addition to its 1-20 dice is now selling icosahedra with two clearly-engraved, unmistakably different sets of 1-10. The first set is the plain 1-10, and the second set is 1-10 with a small "+" in front. This allows the user to mark the die in only one color or leave it as is, and still positively identify the high and low ranges when reading the die as a d20. Of course, when using the die as a d10, you simply ignore the plus sign.

This system is even cleverer than it seems. For those people who are disgruntled at the need to read a number with a "+" in front and mentally add ten to read in the 'teens, there is a way of marking the dice so that they read directly. Simply mark only the vertical part of the "+," and you have a die that reads in the high series with a small "1" in front. Thus the numbers 11-19 can be read directly on the die (the 20 still needs to have the complete "+" marked in, but you can't have everything). And these additions are small enough so that you can still read the die as a d10 without distraction when this is what you need.

Congratulations to Lou Zocchi for solving a problem in a way that also saves the gamer money.
—John T. Sapienza, Jr.

Computer Games

ZORK III: THE DUNGEON MASTER (Infocom Inc.); \$39.95. Available for Atari 800 (32K), Apple II+ (48K), TRS-80, Commodore 64, and seven others. Published 1982.

ZORK III is the culmination of the all-text adventure saga which began with *ZORK I: The Underground Empire*. If you solve all of the subtle mysteries, you may end the game with all of the treasures of ZORK at your disposal. Along the way, you may see and hear the legendary Dimwit Flathead or speak with the omniscient Dungeon Master himself.

ZORK III is slightly smaller than either *ZORK I* or *II*, but is rich in subtle detail. All of the puzzles are logical, complex, and highly interactive. In terms of puzzle quality, this game is possibly the most difficult on the market today.

The implementation of this game is first-class, with an excellent save-game feature, command parser and large vocabulary. In fact, the vocabulary of this game is arguably its most outstanding feature. It is sufficiently large to keep you from becoming frustrated by a limited vocabulary while allowing you to become frustrated by the game's many puzzles.

ZORK III is possibly the ultimate in all-text adventure games. If you enjoy the intellectual stimulation of such games, *ZORK III* is highly recommended.

—Terry Quinn

Miniatures

DRAGON LORDS — Horrors of the Marsh, Orcs of the Severed Hand, Subterranean Terrors (Grenadier Models); \$7. 25mm fantasy miniatures, 10-piece boxed sets. Sculpted by John Drenett. Released 1983.

Unlike some of the other *Dragon Lords* sets, these three Grenadier releases are newly sculpted figures — not just a repackaged set. And after continued study, I still can't tell which set I like best.

"Horrors of the Marsh" gives us some standard RPG monsters (a troll, a giant rat, and a trio of "lizard" men) and some new beasts, like a Log Leech and a Vegetation Beast. The Lizard Men are lean and nasty, and the detail is excellent — from the scales on the top of the head to the mace-like tail end. I'm especially fond of the skull-adorned loin-cloths each one is wearing. And the Sludge Serpent is the best snake I've ever seen . . . in a marsh or on dry land.

"Orcs of the Severed Hand" is a group of nine foul-looking orcs with a particularly grisly banner, which one of the figures proudly carries while sounding a battle horn. Every figure is clearly an individual, with the varying sizes, poses, and even faces you would expect if you ever really ran into this little brigade. Again, the detail is staggering, from designs carved into the orcs' helmets to the strap holding the head of one orc's war hammer to the shaft.

"Subterranean Terrors" is perhaps the weakest of the three sets, but it still has some incredible pieces. The Nightmare Worm with Larvoid Rider is one — a worm with short arms wielding a spear, intertwined with and riding a larger, fanged cousin. There are some other pieces in this set I'll just call "interesting" — they're not bad, they just didn't do anything for me.

Overall casting quality is excellent. Many of the figures were touched by a file more out of nervous habit than from any need to remove flash. The fit on detached pieces was perfect. A minimum of preparation was required before priming and painting began.

Another nice touch was the insert sheet provided in the "Horrors of the Marsh" set. Complete data is given on each playing figure in a fantasy roleplaying game. Size, hit points, experience level, defense, attacks, treasure, movement, and behavior notes for each creature are given. Most of the information is sufficiently generic to be used with any system; those stats that aren't can be easily converted. Unfortunately, such stats are not provided with the other two sets. The missing stats were the biggest disappointment I encountered.

To sum up, these are three fine figure sets — good looking, well made, and definitely worth the money.

—Scott D. Haring

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LESSON ONE:

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE OCCASIONAL ORC GUARD

By J.D. WEBSTER

color by Denis Loubet

A TYPICAL ORC GUARD



JDW 84

... PESKY THIEVES...

IT'S LOCKED, FIN!

WE'LL PICK IT, ... IDIOT

BUT THE LAST GUY THAT PICKED A LOCK HERE GOT SKEWERED BY AN ORC!; WHY DON'T YOU PICK IT!

CAUSE YOU'RE A NON-PLAYER CHARACTER...

WHOA! WE GOT RIGHTS!

THIS HEAVY CROSSBOW SEZ YOU DON'T...

OH... , GOOD POINT...



DEI DOOS!! ... I... GRISHNAG KI...

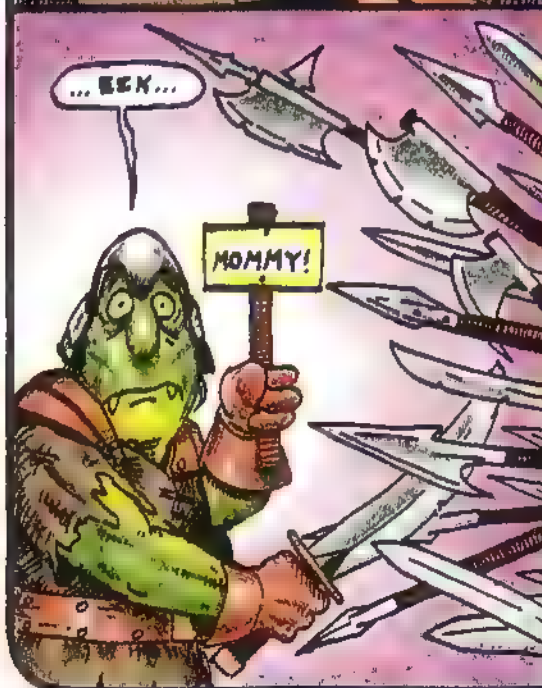


... UH... GRISHNAG...
... KILL ... UH...
... (WOOOG)...
... ER ... DOOH...

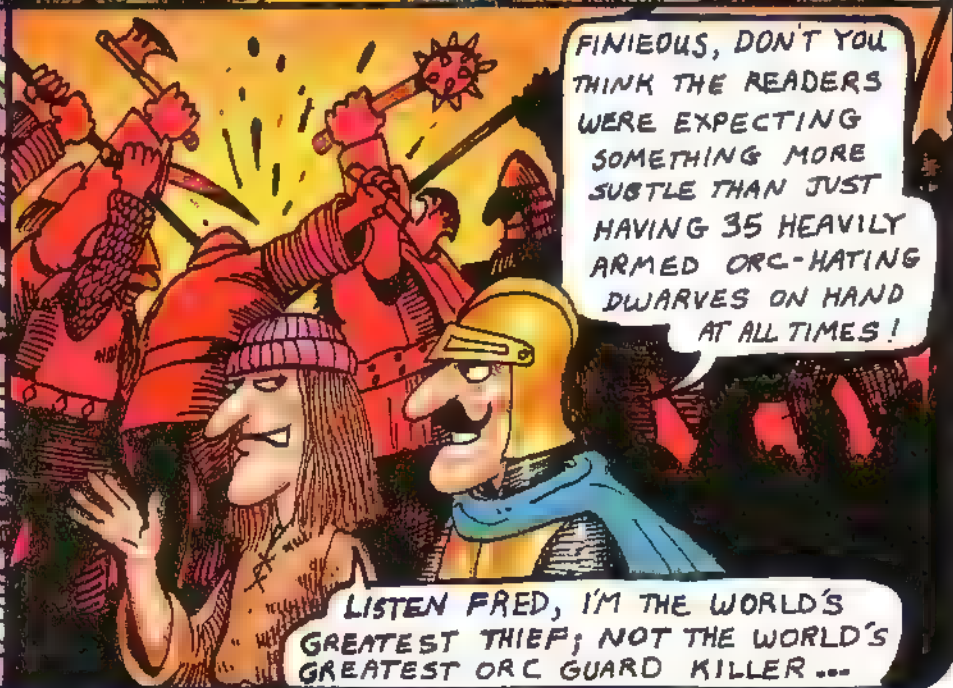


... ESK...

MOMMY!



FINIEOUS, DON'T YOU THINK THE READERS WERE EXPECTING SOMETHING MORE SUBTLE THAN JUST HAVING 35 HEAVILY ARMED ORC-HATING DWARVES ON HAND AT ALL TIMES!



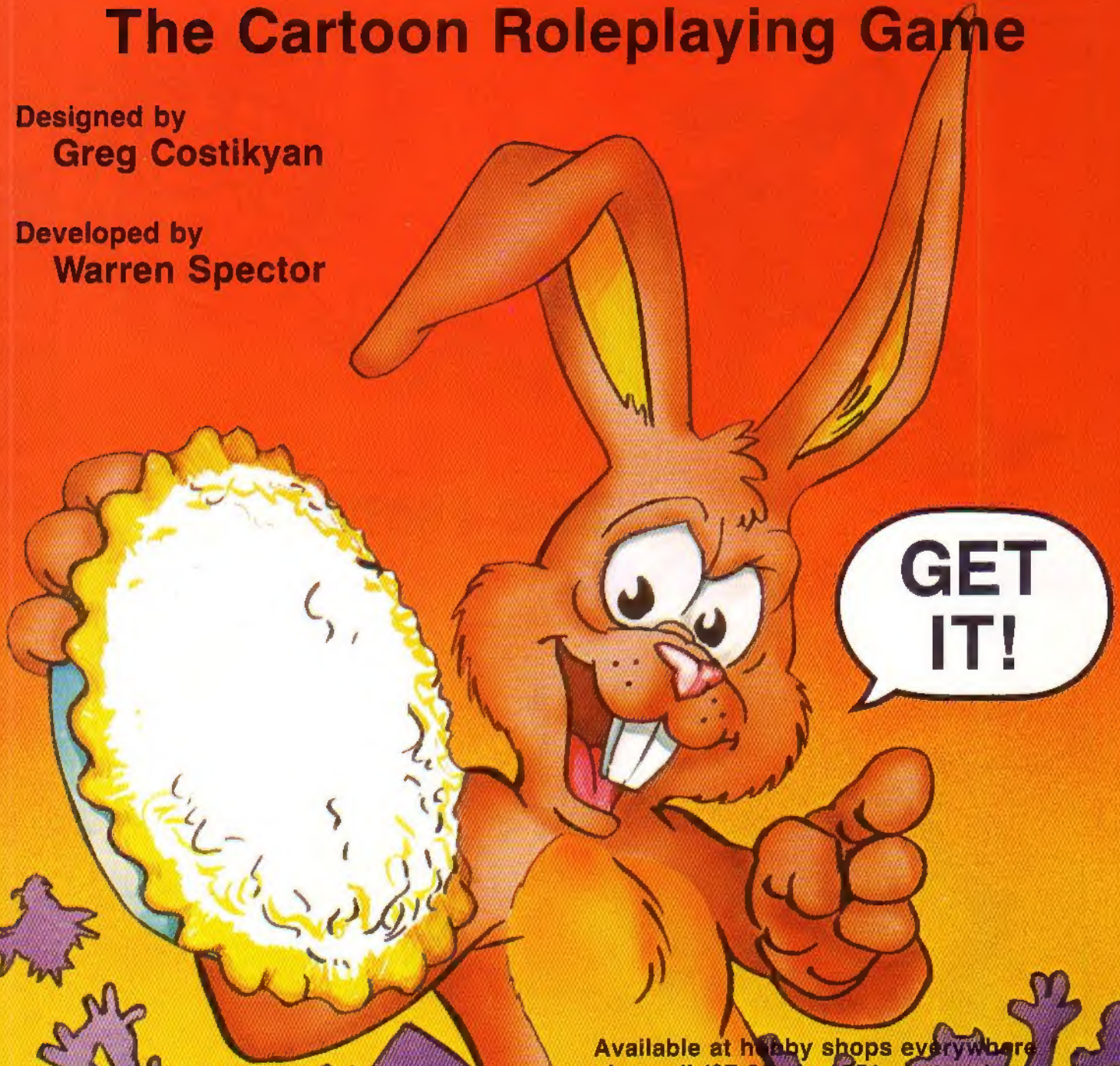
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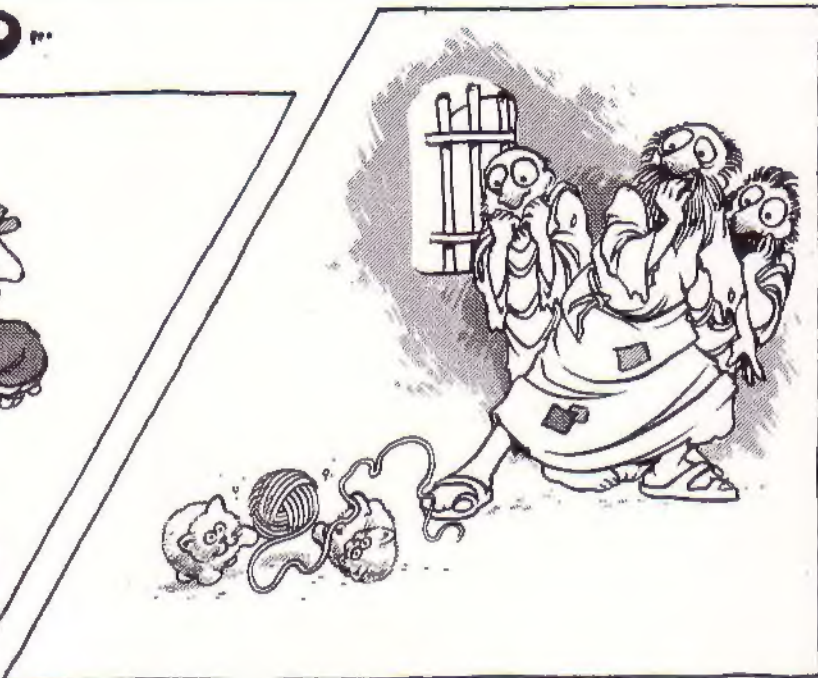
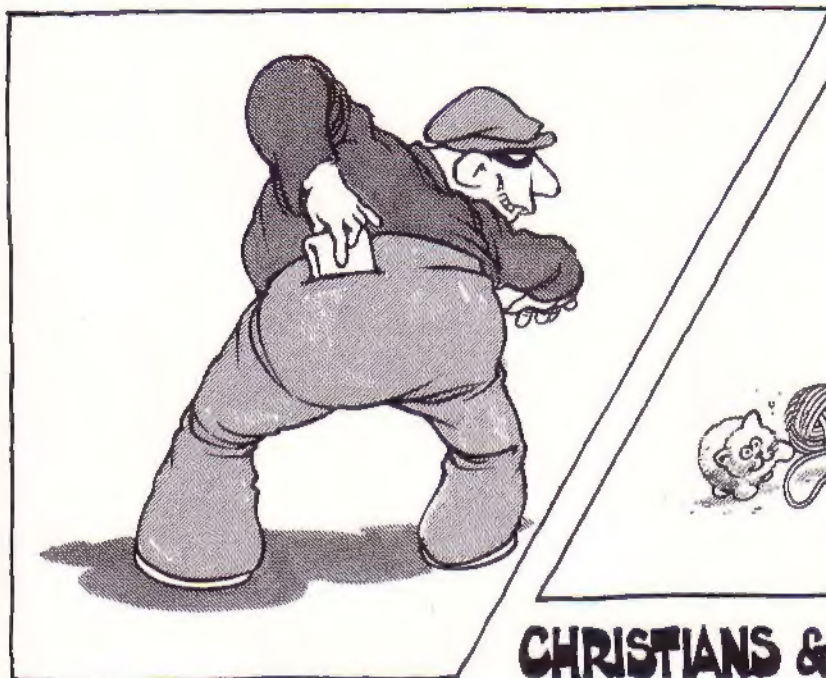
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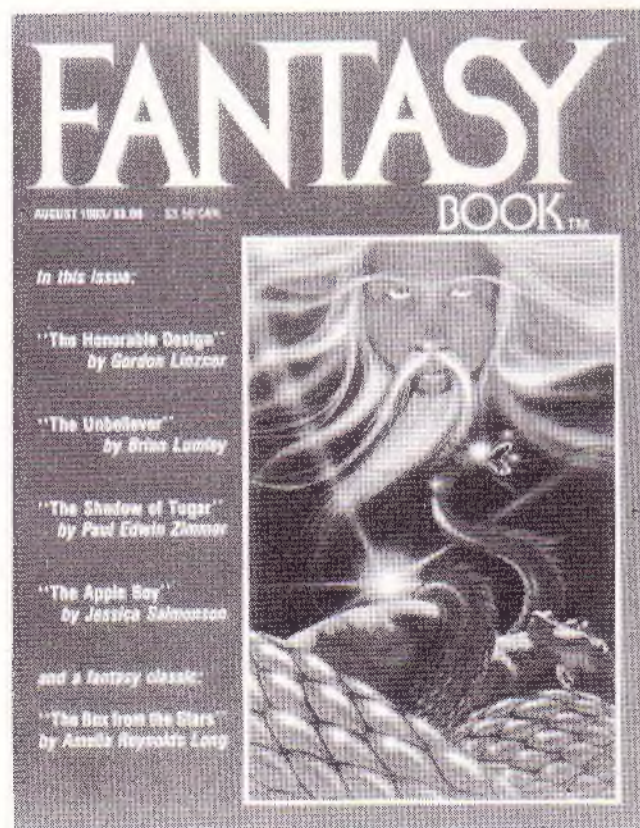
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BUG-EYED MONSTERS

They Want Our Women!

On silent grav sleds, the alien creatures slide through the forest, readying their lasers and stunners, drooling slightly in anticipation. They choose their first target: a little clapboard house nestled in the woods above town. They attack. The sounds of lasers and stunners are soon met by cries of fear and rage. Wild with lust, they fail to notice when one human makes it to a car and careens away to rouse the citizenry of the small town against the alien threat.

Ugly, slobbering, bug-eyed monsters! They land in remote American towns and make off with women. BUG-EYED MONSTERS is the new West End release by Greg Costikyan, designer of the successful *Creature That Ate Sheboygan*.™ In this game, Greg returns to the "Creature" genre, bringing a flying saucer with menacing monsters to the quiet remote American town of Freedom, New Hampshire.

One player, as the monster, must attempt to kidnap the earthling women (the most beautiful in the universe). The other player must rally the citizens of the town to

stop the repulsive invaders and save his womenfolk from a fate worse than death.

A special "Aliens Kidnap Presidential Hopeful" scenario is also provided. Dwight Eisenhower, campaigning for the New Hampshire primary, along with an entourage of state troopers and secret service men, is surprised by a party of bug-eyed monsters. Will they kidnap America's war hero?

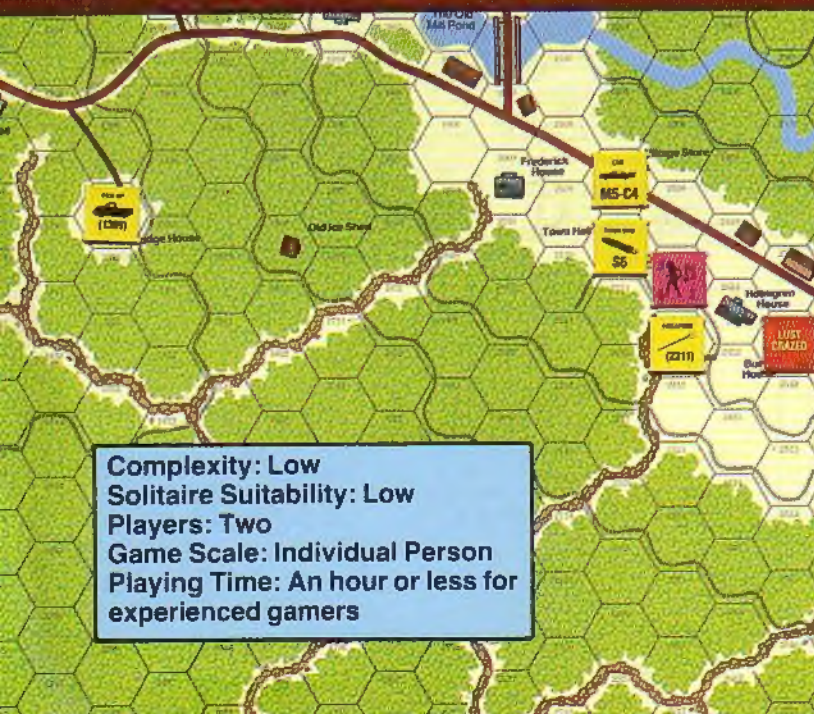
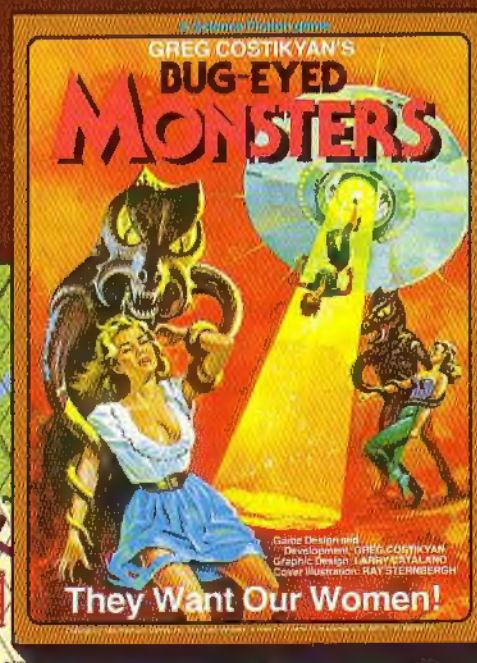
A simple but elegant game system with clear brief rules makes BUG-EYED MONSTERS a good introduction to adventure gaming, but its subject and smooth play will appeal to the hardcore gamer as well.

THE DESIGNER

Greg Costikyan is the designer of nine published games, including THE CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN,™ SWORDS AND SORCERY,™ DEATH MAZE,™ RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT,™ and TRAIL BLAZER.™

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Complexity: Low
Solitaire Suitability: Low
Players: Two
Game Scale: Individual Person
Playing Time: An hour or less for experienced gamers